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SHORT PAPERS

ON

CHURCH HISTORY.

BY

ANDREW MILLER.

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—MATTHEW xvi. 18.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

110. j. 628

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PREFACE.

THE following "Short Papers" have far outgrown their original intention. They were commenced in "Things New and Old," chiefly with the view of supplying, in a series of papers, a brief outline of Church History, for the convenience of our numerous readers. But the vastness of the subject and the limited space of the magazine compelled me to abandon the design and publish them in a separate form.

As all we know of history comes to us through books, I have examined, with some care, the authors which are most esteemed in this country and considered the most reliable. And although there is frequent reference to volume and page, this by no means indicates all that has been gathered from those histories. It would be impossible to say how many thoughts, words, and sentences, are interwoven with my own. The references have been generally given, not so much to verify what has been written, as to induce the reader to study the larger works if

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he have an opportunity. The materials are so varied and abundant, that the difficulty lies in making a selection, so as to maintain a continued historic line, and yet leave out what would now be neither profitable nor interesting.

The following are the principal histories I have consulted, and to which I am largely indebted: Milman's; Greenwood's; Neander's; J. C. Robertson's; Waddington's; Mosheim's; Milner's; Collier's; Du Pin's; and Gardner's "Faiths of the World."

But I have aimed at more than mere history. It has been my desire to connect with it Christ and His word, so that the reader may receive the truth and blessing, through grace, to his soul.

It will be observed that I commence with the Lord's revealed purpose concerning His church in Matthew xvi. Other parts of the New Testament have been carefully examined as to the first planting of the church, but its actual history I have endeavoured to trace in the light of the seven epistles, addressed to the seven churches in Asia. This of course must be in a very general way, as I have been desirous to give the reader as broad a view of ecclesiastical

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history as possible, consistently with my plan and brevity.

The apostle John learnt the history of the church at the feet of Jesus. Blessed place for both reader and writer! It is there He reveals His mind to His disciples about the church and her enemies, Himself and His glories. But the disciple must know Him to learn all at His feet; as John says, "When I saw *him*." None on earth knew the Saviour so intimately as John; but the glory of His person, as now revealed, completely overwhelmed him. He was then an exile for his faithfulness to "the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." He was sharing in the sufferings of His persecuted church.

Such was the blessed position of John, when he heard the prophetic history of the church as introductory to God's judgment of the world that now is. Holding fast the word of God, faithful in his testimony to Christ, persecuted for the truth's sake, a humble disciple at the Master's feet, the most wonderful histories and glories are revealed to him. He had honoured the Lord in his life and in his ways; and now

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the time was come for the Lord to honour His faithful servant. And this He did by shewing him, from His own point of view, the glories of heaven, the miseries of hell, the histories of earth, down to the last and closing scene when the dead appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and the annals of time and the universe itself melt into the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The Lord's tender ways in love and grace to His banished one are beautiful beyond all description. "And he laid his right hand upon me," John tells us, "saying unto me, *Fear not*; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death." Here the risen Lord assures John, and all who believe in Him, that there is nothing now to fear. Sin and guilt are put away, every enemy is vanquished, and every circumstance of death and the grave completely mastered. "*Fear not*," He says, and why? Because "I am the first and the last"—God as well as man; and farther, "I am he that liveth, and was dead:" but now, I am alive for

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evermore in resurrection, where no enemy or evil can ever come. And surely every believer, weak or strong, is there with Him, and under the shelter of "His right hand." Besides, He has the keys of death and hell—the symbol of His authority and power over the whole realm of Satan.

May the Lord's blessing accompany the volume that now goes forth; and may He give you, my dear reader, to know Himself, His victories, His glories, His revelations: and in true humility, like the beloved disciple, to study them all at the Master's feet.

So prays,

Ever yours truly,

A. M.

LONDON, *Dec.* 1, 1873.

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SHORT PAPERS

ON

CHURCH HISTORY.

INTRODUCTION.

RATHER more than three years ago, two papers appeared in the Magazine, "Things New and Old," under the title of "Philadelphia." These were afterwards published separately as a little book, with a few foot-notes from church history. The re-appearance of these papers, in their new form, first suggested the thought of the proposed forthcoming papers under the above title, in the monthly serial.

Many of our readers, we know, have neither the time nor the opportunity for reading the voluminous works that have been written from time to time on the history of the church. Still, that which has been the dwelling-place of God for the last eighteen hundred years, must be a subject of the deepest interest to all His children. We speak not now of the church as it is often represented in history, but as it is spoken of in scripture. There it is seen in its true spiritual character, as the body of Christ, and as the "habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians ii.

We must always bear in mind, when reading what is called a history of the church, that from the days of the apostles until now, there have been two distinct, and

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widely different, classes of persons in the professing church: the merely nominal, and the real—the true, and the false. This was predicted. "For I know this," says the apostle, "that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts xx.) His Second Epistle to Timothy is also full of warnings and directions as to the various forms of evil which were then but too plainly manifest. A rapid change for the worse had taken place from the time that his first epistle was written. He exhorts the truly godly to walk in separation from those who had a form of godliness, but who denied the power thereof. "From such," he says, "turn away." Such exhortations are always needed, always applicable—as much now as then. We cannot separate ourselves from Christendom, without giving up Christianity; but we can and ought to separate ourselves from what the apostle calls "vessels to dishonour." The promise is, that, "if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

It is interesting—though painfully so—to mark the difference on this point between the First and the Second Epistles to Timothy. In the first, the church is spoken of according to its true character and blessed position on the earth. There it is seen as the house of God—the depositary and display of truth to man. In the Second Epistle, it is spoken of as what it had become through the failure of those into whose hands it had been entrusted.

Take one passage from each Epistle in illustration. 1. "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto

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thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth." 2. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." Here all is changed—sadly changed. In place of divine order, there is hopeless confusion; in place of "*the* house of God, the pillar and ground of truth," there is "*a* great house"—practically, "the mystery of iniquity." In place of the house being kept according to the will of God and suitable for Him, it was arranged and ordered according to the will of man, and for his own personal advantage and exaltation. Thus early had the evils, which have been the sin and the disgrace of Christendom ever since, made their appearance. But this was overruled for good. The Spirit of God, in great mercy, has supplied us with the plainest directions for the darkest day of the church's history, and has pointed out the way of truth for the worst of times; so that we are left without excuse. Times and circumstances change, not the truth of God.

THE MISTAKES OF HISTORIANS IN GENERAL.

Some historians, it is sorrowful to say, have not taken into account this sad mixture of evil vessels with the good—of true Christians and false. They have not themselves been spiritually minded men. Hence they have rather made it their chief object to record the many unchristian and wicked ways of mere professors. They have dwelt at great length, and with great minuteness, on the heresies that have troubled the church—on the abuses that have disgraced it, and on the controversies that have distracted it. Much rather would we endea-

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vour to trace, all down through the long dark pages of history, *the silver line of God's grace in true Christians;* though at times the alloy so predominates that the pure ore is scarcely perceptible.

God has never left Himself without a witness. He has had His loved and cherished, though hidden, ones, in all ages and in all places. No eye but His could see the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. And tens of thousands, we doubt not, even from the darkest ages of Christianity, will be found at last in the "glorious church," which Christ will present to Himself, on the long-looked-for day of His nuptial glory. Many precious stones from the rubbish of the "middle ages" will reflect His grace and glory on that crowning day. Blessed thought! even now it fills the soul with ecstasy and delight. Lord, hasten that happy day, for thine own name's sake!

The truly godly are instinctively humble. They are generally retiring, and for the most part but little known. There is no humility so deep and real as that which the knowledge of grace produces. Such lowly and hidden ones find but a small place on the historic page. But the insinuating, zealous, heretic, and the noisy, visionary, fanatic, are too clamorous to escape notice. Hence it is, that the historian has so carefully recorded the foolish principles and the evil practices of such men.

We will now turn for a little, and take a general view of the first part of our subject, namely,

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

These seven epistles, so far, will guide our future studies. We believe they are not only *historical*, but also

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prophetical. Doubtless they are strictly historical, and this fact must be allowed its full weight in studying their prophetic character. Seven churches actually existed in the seven cities here named, and in the condition here described. But it is equally clear, that they were intended, by Him who knows the end from the beginning, to bear a prophetic meaning, as well as an historical application. They were selected from amongst many, and so arranged and described, as to foreshadow what was to come. To limit their application to the seven literal churches then in Asia, would be to mar the unity of the Apocalypse, and to lose the promised blessing. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." The character of the whole book is prophetic and symbolic. The second and third chapters are no exception to this. They are introduced by the Lord Himself in their mystic character. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

The number *seven* is characteristic. It marks a complete circle of the thoughts or ways of God as to time. Hence the seven days of the week—the seven feasts of Israel—the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven in mystery. It is often used throughout this book, which takes up both Jew, Gentile, and the church of God, as responsible on the earth. Hence we have seven churches, seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven angels, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, and seven last plagues. In chapters ii., iii. only the church is seen as responsible on the earth, and the object of divine govern-

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ment. From chapter iv.—xix. she is seen in heaven. Then she appears in full manifested glory with her Lord. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

In the body of the book, especially from chapter vi., the Jews and Gentiles come before us, and are judicially dealt with from the throne of God in heaven. But this will not take place till after the church—the true bride of the Lamb—is caught up to heaven, and the merely nominal, corrupt thing finally rejected.

The threefold division of the book, as given by the Lord Himself, makes the order of events quite plain, and ought to have immense weight as a principle of interpretation in the study of the Apocalypse. In chapter i. 19, He gives us the contents and plan of the whole book: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,"—or, literally, "after these things." "The things which thou hast seen" refer to the revelation of Jesus as seen by John in chapter i. "The things which are"—to the time-condition of the professing body as presented in chapters ii., iii. "The things which shall be hereafter" from chapter iv. to the end. The third division begins with chapter iv. A door is opened in heaven, and the apostle is called to come up. "Come up hither and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter," or "after these things." It is the same word in chapter iv. 1, as in chapter i. 19. The things which are, and the things which shall be *after these things*, cannot possibly be concurrent. The one must end before the other begins.

When the number seven is used, not in a literal, but in a symbolic sense, it always signifies completeness. It

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is evidently thus used in chapters ii., iii. There were other churches, we know, besides those named, but seven are selected and associated, to present a complete picture of what would afterwards be developed in the church's history on earth. The more important moral elements which then existed, the Lord foresaw would re-appear in course of time. Thus we have a seven-fold or divinely perfect picture of the successive states of the professing church, during the entire period of her responsibility on the earth.

We will now take a rapid glance at the outline of the seven churches ; and give a general idea of the different periods in history to which they apply.

EPHESUS.—In Ephesus, the Lord detects the root of all declension. "Thou hast left thy first love." But though true of the apostolic age, it was also solemnly prophetic of the ages following. It is threatened with the removal of the candlestick unless there be repentance. Period—from the apostolic age to the close of the second century.

SMYRNA.—The message to Ephesus is general, to Smyrna it is specific. And though it applied at that time to the assembly there, it shadowed forth, in the most striking way, the repeated persecutions through which the church passed under the heathen emperors. Yet God may have used the power of the world to arrest the progress of evil in the church. Period—from the second century to Constantine.

PERGAMOS.—Here we have the establishment of Christianity by Constantine as the religion of the state.

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Instead of persecuting the Christians, he patronized them. From that moment the downward course of the church is rapid. Her unholy alliance with the world proved her saddest and deepest fall. It was then that she lost the true sense of her relationship to Christ in heaven, and of her character on earth as a pilgrim and a stranger. Period—from the beginning of the fourth to the seventh century, when popery was established.*

THYATIRA.—In Thyatira, we have the popery of the middle ages. Jezebel-like, practising all kinds of wickedness, and persecuting the saints of God, under the disguise of religious zeal. Nevertheless there was a God-fearing remnant in Thyatira, whom the Lord comforts with the bright hope of His coming, and with the promise of power over the nations, when He Himself shall reign. But the word of exhortation is, "That which ye have already, *hold fast till I come.*" Period—from the establishment of popery to the Lord's coming. It goes on to the end, but is characterized by the dark ages.

SARDIS.—Here we see the protestant part of Christendom—that which followed the great work of the Reformation. The foul features of popery disappear, but the new system itself has no vitality. "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." But there are true saints in these lifeless systems, and Christ knows them all.

* The title "Pope" was first adopted by Hyginus in 139; and Pope Boniface III. induced Phocas, Emperor of the East, to confine it to the prelates of Rome in 606. By the connivance of Phocas also, the pope's supremacy over the christian church was established.—*Haydn's Dictionary of Dates.*

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"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." Period—from the eventful sixteenth century onwards. Protestantism after the Reformation.

PHILADELPHIA.—The church of Philadelphia presents a feeble remnant, but they are faithful to the *word* and *name* of the Lord Jesus. They shadow forth the *out-calling* of God in these last days. That out of which they are called becomes Laodicean in character. Christ is in their midst as the Holy One and the True, and is represented as having charge of the house. He has "the key of David." The treasures of the prophetic word are unlocked for those inside. They are also in the sympathies of His patience, and in the expectation of His coming. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Period—since the Reformation; but more especially from the beginning of this century, and still more in the present day. Activity on all hands is rapidly developing the last phases of Christendom.

LAODICEA.—In Laodicea, we have lukewarmness—indifference—latitudinarianism; but with high pretensions, a boastful spirit, and great self-sufficiency. This is the last state of that which bears the name of Christ on the earth. But, alas, it is intolerable to Him. Its final doom has come. Having separated every true believer from the corruptions of Christendom to Himself, He spues it out of His mouth. That which ought to have been sweet

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to His taste, has become nauseous, and it is cast off for ever. Period—co-existing with Philadelphia and Sardis, but especially the closing scene.

Having thus taken a general view of the seven churches, we would now endeavour, through the Lord's help, briefly to trace these different periods of the church's history. And we purpose examining more fully, each of the seven epistles as we go along, that we may ascertain what light is shed on the different periods by these addresses; and how far the facts of church history illustrate the scripture history of these two chapters. May the Lord guide, for the refreshment and blessing of His own beloved ones.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ROCK-FOUNDATION.

In commencing the study of any subject, it is well to know its beginnings—the original intention or plan, and the first step in its history. These we have in the clearest, fullest way, as to the church, in holy scripture. There we have not only the original intention, but the plans and specifications of the great Builder, and the early history of the work under His own hand. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts ii.) This is historical. The foundation had been laid, and the work was going on; but the Lord Himself was still the only builder; therefore up to this time, all was real and perfect.

At the close of the Jewish dispensation the Lord added the saved remnant of Israel to the newly formed church: but at the close of the present or christian dispensation, He will take all who believe in His name up to heaven in glorified bodies. Not one belonging to the church will be added to the congregation of millennial saints. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 14–18.) This will be the happy close of the history of

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the church on earth—the true spouse of Christ. The dead raised—the living changed, and all, in their bodies of glory, caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we have the entire limits of the church defined, and the whole period of her history before us. But we return to the dawn of her day on the earth.

Under the figure of a building, the Lord first introduces the subject of the church. And so infinitely precious are His words, that we may adopt them as the text or motto of its whole history. They have sustained the hearts and the hopes of His people in all ages, and in all circumstances; and they will ever be the stronghold of faith. What can be more blessed, more assuring, more peace-giving, than these words?—

"UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT."

In Matthew xvi. the Lord questions His disciples as to the sayings of men concerning Himself. This leads to the glorious confession of Peter, and also to the gracious revelation of the Lord concerning His church. It may be well to transfer the whole conversation to our pages. It all bears so directly on our subject.

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias: and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed

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it unto thee, but *my Father which is in heaven.* And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Here we have the two main things connected with the proposed building—the Rock-foundation, and the divine Builder. "Upon this rock I will build my church." But who is, or what is, "this rock?" some may inquire. Clearly, we answer, the confession of Peter; not Peter himself, as the apostasy teaches. True, he was a stone —a living stone in the new temple; "Thou art Peter" —thou art a stone. But the Father's revelation, by Peter, of the glory of the Person of His Son, is the foundation on which the church is built—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But the glory of the Person of the Son in *resurrection* is the unveiled truth here. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Immediately on the confession by Peter, the Lord intimates His intention to build His church, and asserts its eternal security. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

He Himself, the fountain of life, could not be conquered by death, but in dying as the great Substitute for sinners, He triumphed over death and the grave, and is alive for evermore, as He said to His apostle John after His resurrection: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i. 18.) What majestic, what triumphant words are these! They are the words of a conqueror—of one who has power; but of power over the gates of hades—the place of separate spirits. The keys—symbol of authority and power—hang at His

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girdle. The *stroke* of death may fall upon a Christian, but the *sting* is gone. It comes as a messenger of peace to conduct the weary pilgrim home to eternal rest. Death is no longer the *master*, but the *servant* of the Christian. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or *death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Corinthians iii. 21–23.

The Person of Christ, then, the Son of the living God —in His resurrection-glory—is the foundation, the solid, the imperishable foundation, on which the church is built. As alive from the dead, He communicates life in resurrection to all who are built on Him as the true foundation-stone. This is plain from what Peter says in his first Epistle. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone. . . . ye also, as *lively* stones, are built up a spiritual house." And further down in the same chapter he says, "Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious," or "an honour." (See margin.) May both reader and writer note well these two most precious truths in connection with our "Rock-foundation"—divine life and divine preciousness. These are communicated to, and become the possession of, all who put their trust in Christ. "To *whom* coming," not to *what* coming; it is the *Person* of Christ we come to, and have to do with. His life—life in resurrection—becomes ours. From that moment He is our life. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone . . . . ye also, as *living* stones, are built up a spiritual house." Christ's own life, as the risen Man, and all that He is heir to, is ours. Oh! wondrous, marvellous, blessed truth! Who would not desire, above all things, this life, and this life beyond the power of death—the gates of hades? Eternal victory is stamped on the risen

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life of Christ, it can never more be tested, and this is the believer's life.

But there is more than *life* for every living stone in this spiritual temple. There is also Christ's *preciousness*. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious;" literally, "the preciousness." That is, just as the life of Christ becomes ours when we believe in Him, so does His preciousness. The principle in both is the same. The life may be viewed as our capacity to enjoy; and the preciousness, as our title to possess our inheritance on high. His honours, titles, dignities, privileges, possessions, glories, are ours—all ours in Him. "To them that believe he is the preciousness." O wondrous thought! "He loved the church and gave himself for it." Such then is our Rock-foundation, and such the blessedness of all who are on the Rock. Like Jacob of old, when a pilgrim and a stranger he rested on the stone in the desert, the whole panorama of heaven's riches in grace and glory passed before him. Genesis xxviii.

CHRIST THE ONLY BUILDER OF HIS CHURCH.

But Christ is also the Builder of His Church. The building against which no craft or power of the enemy can ever prevail is Christ's own work, though we read of other builders. "Upon this rock I will build my church." It is well to be clear on this point, so that we may not confound what *man* builds with what Christ builds. There must be the greatest confusion of mind, both as to the truth of God and the present state of Christendom, unless this distinction is seen. Nothing is more important to note here than that Christ is the only Builder of His church; though Paul and Apollos, and all true evangelists, are *ministers*, by whom

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sinners believe. The Lord's work in the souls of believers is perfect. It is a real, spiritual, personal work. Through His grace in their hearts they come to Himself, as unto a living stone, and are built upon Him who is risen from among the dead. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Such are the living stones with which Christ builds His holy temple; and the gates of hell can never prevail against it. Thus Peter himself, and all the apostles, and all true believers, are built up a spiritual house. When Peter speaks of this building in his First Epistle, he says nothing of himself as a builder. Here Christ is the Builder. It is His work, and His *only*. "*I* will build my church," He says.

Let us now see from the word of God what man builds —what materials he uses, and the way he goes to work. In 1 Corinthians iii., 2 Timothy ii., we have these things brought before us. "A great house" is raised by human instrumentality: but which, in a certain sense, is also the church, and the house of God: as in 1 Timothy iii. 16 we read of "the house of God, which is the church of the living God." It is also spoken of as Christ's house in Hebrews iii., "whose house are we." But the house soon became sadly corrupted through human infirmity and positive wickedness. The authority of God's word by many was set aside, and man's will became supreme. The effect of human philosophy on the simple institutions of Christ was soon painfully manifest. But wood, hay, and stubble, can never be "fitly framed together" with gold, silver, and precious stones. The house became great in the world; like the mustard tree, in the branches of which many find a convenient lodging. Connection with the "great house" gives man a status in the world, in place of being like the *Master*, despised and rejected.

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The archbishop stands next to royalty. But the professing church is not only outwardly great, it is most pretentious, and seeks to put the stamp of God on its own unhallowed work. This is its greatest wickedness, and the source of its blindness, confusion, and worldliness.

Paul, as one chosen of the Lord to do His work, laid the foundation of "God's building" in Corinth, and others built upon it. But they did not all build with divine materials. The right foundation was laid, and every man was to take heed how he builded thereon. In connection with the true foundation, some might build gold, silver, and precious stones, and others wood, hay, and stubble. That is, some might teach sound doctrine, and look for living faith in all who applied for communion: others might teach unsound doctrine, and receive into the fellowship of the church persons in whom was no faith—the mere outward observance of ordinances taking the place of faith and eternal life. Here man's instrumentality, responsibility, and failure came in. Nevertheless, the builder himself may be saved, having faith in Christ, though his work is destroyed. But there is another and a worse class of builders, who corrupt the temple of the Lord, and are themselves destroyed. We give, for the convenience of the reader, the entire passage. Nothing can be plainer. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day

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shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. . . . If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Verse 10—17.

We may further observe on the Lord's words, "upon this rock I will build my church," that He had not begun to build it yet, He is telling them what He is going to do. He does not say, I *have* built it, or I *am* building it, but I *will* build it; and this He began to do at Pentecost.

But there is another truth most intimately connected with the history of the church, and linked up with its condition and character, on the earth, that we must notice, before proceeding with its actual history. We refer to the truth contained in the expression,

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

This leads to the "great house"—already referred to—of outward profession. At the same time we must bear in mind, that though intimately connected, the kingdom of heaven and the great house are quite distinct. In title, the world belongs to the King. "The field is the world." His servants are to go on sowing. In result, we have "a great house," or Christendom.* But when all that which is merely nominal in Christendom shall be

* The terms church, kingdom of heaven, and great house, are scriptural, and somewhat different in their meaning as used by the Lord and His apostles. The term "my church," as used by the Lord, can only embrace true and living members. The primary thought in the expression "kingdom of heaven," surely refers to

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swept away by judgment, the kingdom will be established in power and glory. This will be the millennium.

While still speaking to Peter about the church, the Lord added, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The church, as built by Christ, and the kingdom of heaven as opened by Peter, are widely different things. It is one of the great but common mistakes of Christendom, to use the terms interchangeably as if they meant the same thing. And theological writers in all ages, from assuming, as a basis, that they are the same, have written in the most confused way, both as to the church and the kingdom. The expression is *dispensational*, just as the similar phrase, "the kingdom of God," is *moral*. But unless we have some acquaintance with the dispensational ways of God, we can never rightly divide His word. That which Christ Himself builds, and that which man builds *instrumentally*, by means, it may be, of preaching and baptizing, must not be confounded. The church which is Christ's body is built upon the confession that He is the Son of the living God, glorified in resurrection. Every truly converted soul has to do with

the *authority* of the ascended Lord. And all who profess subjection to Him are owned as in the kingdom. In the "great house" we see the evil, which had crept into the professing body through the failure of man, in *activity*, so that in result it is co-extensive with the kingdom of heaven and the professing church. But there is another term in constant use which is not found in scripture—Christendom. It is an ecclesiastical term, and originally meant all who were christened, or those portions of the world in which Christianity prevails, in distinction from heathen or Mahometan lands. But now it is used synonymously with the other three terms already considered. In a general way, the four terms are used interchangeably, though originally different in their meaning and application. But where is it that there is not confusion?

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Christ Himself before it can have anything to say to the church. The kingdom is a wider thing, and takes in every baptized person—the whole scene of christian profession, whether true or false.

Christ does not say to Peter that He will give Him *the keys of the church, or the keys of heaven.* Had He done so, there might have been some show of reason for the evil system of popery. But He merely says, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"—or of the new dispensation. Keys, it has been said, are not for building temples, but for opening doors; and the Lord honoured Peter to open the door of the kingdom, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. (Acts ii. 10.) But the language of Christ about His church is of another order. It is simple, beautiful, emphatic, and unmistakable. "My church." What depth, what fulness there is in these words: "My church!" When the heart is in fellowship with Christ about His church, there will be an apprehension of His affections towards it, which we have no power of expressing. As it is, we love to linger over these two words, "My church!" but who can speak of the measure of Christ's heart that is therein revealed? Again, think of these other two words, "This rock." As if He had said, "The glory of my Person, and the power of my life in resurrection, form the solid foundation of "My church." And again, "I will build." Thus we see in these seven words, that everything is in Christ's own hands, as "to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

THE OPENING OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The administration of the kingdom, the Lord, in an especial manner, committed to Peter, as we see in the

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early chapters of the Acts. The term is taken from the Old Testament. (See Dan. ii.; vii.) In chapter ii. we have the kingdom; in chapter vii. we have the king. The phrase, kingdom of heaven, occurs only in the Gospel of Matthew, where the evangelist writes chiefly for Israel.

The bringing in of the kingdom of heaven in power and glory on the earth, in the Person of the Messiah, was the natural expectation of every godly Jew. John the Baptist, as the Lord's forerunner, came preaching, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. But in place of the Jews receiving their Messiah, they rejected and crucified Him; consequently, the kingdom, according to Jewish expectations, was set aside. Nevertheless, it was introduced in another form. When the rejected Messiah ascended to heaven, and took His place at God's right hand, triumphant over every foe, the kingdom of heaven began. Now the king is in heaven, and as Daniel says, "the heavens do rule," though not openly. And from the time that He ascended until He return, it is the kingdom in *mystery*. (Matt. xiii.) When He comes back again in power and great glory it will be the kingdom in *manifestation*.

The new economy, Peter was privileged to open to both Jew and Gentile. This he did in his address to the Jews, Acts ii., and in his address to the Gentiles, Acts x. But again we would draw attention to the fact, that the church, or the assembly of God, and the kingdom of heaven, are not the same thing. Let us be clear, in starting, as to this fundamental point. The identifying the two things has produced great confusion of thought and may be viewed as the origin of Puseyism, popery, and every human system in Christendom. The following remarks on "the tare field," from a recent publication,

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bear directly on this subject, though they refer to a later period than the early chapters of the Acts.*

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

"Matthew xiii. 24, 25. 'Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, *the kingdom of heaven* is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way'—exactly what is become of the profession of Christ. There are two things necessary for the inroad of evil among Christians. The first is the unwatchfulness of the Christians themselves. They get into a careless state, they sleep, and the enemy comes and sows tares. This began at an early epoch in Christendom. We find the germs even in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more so in the Epistles. 1 Thessalonians is the first inspired Epistle that the Apostle Paul wrote; and the second was written shortly after. And yet he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work; that there were other things to follow, such as the apostasy and the man of sin, and that when the lawlessness should be fully manifest (instead of working secretly), then the Lord would put an end to the lawless one and all concerned. The mystery of iniquity seems akin to the sowing of the tares spoken of here. Some time after 'when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit'—when Christianity began to make rapid strides in the earth—'then appeared the tares also.' But it is evident the tares were sown almost immediately after the good seed. No

* *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew.* By W. Kelly. London: G. Morrish.

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matter what the work of God is, Satan is always close upon its heels. When man was made, he listened to the serpent and fell. When God gave the law, it was broken even before it was committed into the hands of Israel. Such is always the history of human nature.

"So the mischief is done in the field, and never repaired. The tares are not for the present taken out of the field: there is no judgment of them. Does this mean that we are to have tares in the church? If the kingdom of heaven meant the church, there ought to be no discipline at all: you ought to allow uncleanness of flesh or spirit there. Here is the importance of seeing the distinction between the church and the kingdom. The Lord forbids the tares to be taken out of the kingdom of heaven: 'Let both grow together until the harvest' (ver. 30), that is, till the Lord comes in judgment. Were the kingdom of heaven the same as the church, it would, I repeat, amount to no less than this: that no evil, let it be ever so flagrant or plain, is to be put out of the church till the day of judgment. We see, then, the importance of making these distinctions, which too many despise. They are all-important for truth and holiness. Nor is there a single word of God that we can do without.

"What then is the meaning of this parable? It has nothing to do with the question of church communion. It is the 'kingdom of heaven' that is spoken of—the scene of the confession of Christ, whether true or false. Thus Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Roman Catholics, as well as protestants, are in the kingdom of heaven; not believers only, but also bad people professing the name of Christ. A man, who is not a Jew or a pagan, and who outwardly professes Christ's name, is in the kingdom of heaven. He may be ever so immoral or heretical,

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but he is not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven. But would it be right to receive him at the table of the Lord? God forbid! If a person falling into open sin were in the church, he ought to be put out of it; but you *ought not* to put him out of the kingdom of heaven. In fact this could only be done by taking away his life; for that is meant by the rooting up of the tares. And this is what worldly Christianity did fall into, in no very long space of time after the apostles were departed from the earth. Temporal punishments were brought in for discipline: laws were made for the purpose of handing over the refractory to the subservient civil power. If they did not honour the so-called church they were not to be suffered to live. In this way, the very evil our Lord had been guarding the disciples against came to pass; and the emperor Constantine used the sword to repress ecclesiastical offenders. He and his successors introduced temporal punishments to deal with the tares, to try and root them up. Take the church of Rome, where you have so thoroughly the confusion of the church with the kingdom of heaven: they claim, if a man is a heretic, to hand him over to the courts of the world to be burnt, and they never confess or correct the wrong, because they pretend to be infallible. Supposing that their victims even were tares, this is to put them out of the kingdom. If you root a tare from the field, you kill it. There may be men outside profaning the name of God; but we must leave them for God to deal with.

"This does not destroy christian responsibility towards those who surround the Lord's table. You will find instructions as to all this in what is written about the church. 'The field is the world;' the church only em-

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braces those believed to be members of Christ's body. Take 1 Corinthians, where we have the Holy Ghost shewing the true nature of ecclesiastical discipline. Supposing there are professing Christians, guilty of any sin you please ; such persons are not to be owned, while they are going on in that sin, as members of Christ's body. A real saint may fall into open sin, but the church, knowing it, is bound to intervene for the purpose of expressing God's judgment about the sin. Were they deliberately to allow such a one to come to the Lord's table they would in effect make the Lord a party to that sin. The question is not whether the person be converted or not. If unconverted, men have no business in the church ; if converted, sin is not to be winked at. The guilty are not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven, they *are* to be put out of the church. So that the teaching of the word of God is most plain as to both these truths. It is wrong to use worldly punishments to deal with a hypocrite, even when he is detected. I may seek the good of his soul, but this is no reason for punishing him thus. But if a Christian is guilty of sin, the church, though called to be patient in judgment, is never to suffer it; but we are to leave guilty people, who are unconverted, to be judged by the Lord at His appearing.

"This is the teaching of the parable of the tares; and it gives a very solemn view of Christianity. As sure as the Son of man sowed good seed, His enemy would sow bad, which would spring up along with the rest; and this evil cannot for the present be got rid of. There is a remedy for evil which enters the church, but not yet for evil in the world.".

It is perfectly clear, both from scripture and history,

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that the great mistake into which the professing body fell was the confounding of these two things—tares with wheat; or, those who were admitted by the administration of baptism to all the official and temporal privileges of the professing church, with those who were truly converted and taught of God. But the vast difference between what we may call the *sacramental* and the *vital* systems, must be clearly understood and carefully distinguished, if we would study church history aright.

Another mistake, equally serious, followed as a consequence. The great, outward, professing body became, in the eyes and in the language of men—*the church.* Godly men were drawn into this snare, so that the distinction between the church and the kingdom was early lost sight of. All the most sacred places and privileges, in the professing body, were thus held in common by godly and ungodly men. The Reformation utterly failed to clear the church of this sad mixture. It has been handed down to us in the Anglican, Lutheran, and Presbyterian systems, as the form of baptism and admission clearly shews. In our own day, the sacramental system prevails to an alarming extent; and is rapidly on the increase. The real and the formal, the living and the dead, are undistinguished in the various forms of protestantism. But, alas! most solemn reflection! there are many in the professing church—in the kingdom of heaven—who will never be in heaven itself. Here we find tares as well as wheat—evil servants as well as faithful ones, and foolish virgins as well as wise ones. Though all who have been baptized are reckoned in the kingdom of heaven, only those who are quickened and sealed with the Holy Ghost belong to the church of God.

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But there is another thing connected with the professing church which demands a brief notice here. We refer to

THE DIVINE PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Not only did the Lord give the keys to Peter that he might open the doors of the new dispensation, but He intrusted to him its internal administration. This principle is all-important in its bearing on the church of God. The words of the commission are these, "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The question is, What do they mean? Clearly, we believe, authority and power from the Lord, to be exercised in and by the church, but limited, in result, to this world. There is no thought in the Lord's words about the church deciding anything as to *heaven*. This is the false interpretation, and the deceiving power of the apostasy. The church on earth can have nothing to say or do with what is done in heaven as to binding or loosing. The sphere of its action is within its own limits, and when it so acts, according to the commission of Christ, it has the promise of ratification in heaven.

Neither is there any thought here, we may add, of the church, or of any of its officials, coming in between the soul and God, as to eternal forgiveness or eternal judgment. This is the daring blasphemy of Rome. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" He reserves this power to Himself alone. Besides, the subjects of church government *are* pardoned, or, at least, are on that ground. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" It will only apply to them that are *within* the pale of the

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church. "But them that are *without* God judgeth." Of every believer in the wide field of Christendom it is said, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever. them that are sanctified." (Heb. x.) Hence, the retaining or the remission of sins by the church is only for the present time, and strictly *administrative* in its character. It is the divine principle of receiving persons into the assembly of God, on the ground of adequate testimony to their conversion, soundness in doctrine, and holiness of life; and also of putting away impenitent offenders until restored by true repentance.

But some of our readers may have the common impression, that this power was only given to Peter and the rest of the apostles, and consequently, ceased with them. This is a mistake. True, it was given to Peter only in the first instance, as we have seen; and no doubt greater power was exercised during the days of the apostles than has been since? but not greater authority. The church has the same *authority* now as then, as to discipline in the assembly, though it lacks the *power*. The word of the Lord remains unchanged. Only an apostle, we believe, could speak as Paul does in 1 Corinthians v. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This was spiritual power in an individual, not the judgment of the church.* The same apostle, in reference to the

* "Delivering to Satan is an act of power—putting out a wicked person a duty attached to the faithfulness of the assembly. No doubt, exclusion from the assembly of God is a very serious thing and leaves us exposed to sorrow and just trouble of heart, and

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same case, says to the assembly, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." The act of putting away was the act, not merely of the apostle, but of the whole assembly. In this case, and in this way, the excommunicated person's sins were *retained*, though evidently a converted man. In the Second Epistle, chapter ii., we find him fully restored. His repentance is accepted by the assembly—his sins are *remitted*. The overflowing of the apostle's heart on this occasion, and his exhortations to the church, are valuable lessons for all who have to do with church government, and are intended to remove that cold suspicion with which an erring brother is too often received back to the privileges of the assembly. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment [or censure] which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love toward him." Here we have a case in point, illustrative of the government of the assembly according to the will of Christ. "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

that from the enemy: but direct delivery to Satan is an act of positive power. It was done in Job's case for his good. It was done by Paul in 1 Corinthians v., though acting in the gathered assembly, and for the destruction of the flesh. And again, without reference to the assembly, in 1 Timothy i. as to Hymenæus and Alexander, that they might learn not to blaspheme. All discipline is for the correction of the individual, though to maintain withal the holiness of the house of God, and clear the consciences of the saints themselves."—*Present Testimony*, vol. i., p. 392, New Series.

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THIS PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT STILL APPLICABLE.

But "how can these principles be carried out now?" is still the question and difficulty with many. Well, we must just go back to the word of God. We ought to be able and willing to say, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." 2 Corinthians xiii. 8.

The administrative authority and power of which we speak was not only given to Peter and the other apostles, but also to the church. In Matthew xviii. we have the working out of the principle laid down in chapter xvi. "Tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever *ye* shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever *ye* shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. . . . . For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus we learn that the acts of the two or three, gathered together in Christ's name, have the same divine sanction as the administration of Peter. And again, in John xx., the Lord delivers the same principle of government to the *disciples*, not merely to the *apostles*, and that too on resurrection ground, where the assembly is livingly united to Christ as the risen Man. This is all important. The spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes the *disciples* free —every disciple free—from the law of sin and death. The church is built upon "this rock"—Christ in resurrection, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came

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Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side: then were the *disciples* glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Here the Lord sets up, we may say, and fairly starts, the New Creation. The disciples are filled and clothed with peace, and with the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. They are to go forth as His messengers, from the resurrection side of His empty grave, bearing the blessed message of peace and eternal life to a world bowed down with sin, sorrow, and death. The principle of their own internal government is also clearly laid down: and its due administration will always give to the christian assembly a distinctive and heavenly character, in the presence of both God and man.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RECEPTION AT THE BEGINNING.

But as this principle is the proper basis of all christian congregations, it may be well to look for a moment at its operation in the days of the apostles. Surely they understood its meaning and how to apply it.

On the day of Pentecost, and for some time after, it does not appear that the young converts were subjected to any examination as to the reality of their faith, either by the apostles or others. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls." Gladly

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receiving the word was the ground of baptism, and fellowship; but the work was then entirely in Christ's own hands. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The attempt to deceive by Ananias and Sapphira was at once detected. Peter acts in his right place, but the Holy Ghost was there in ungrieved majesty and power, and Peter owns it. Hence he says to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" But this virgin state of things soon passed away. Failure set in—the Holy Ghost was grieved, and it became necessary to examine the applicants, as to whether their motives, objects, and state of soul were according to the mind of Christ. We are now in the condition of things described in 2 Timothy ii. We are only to have fellowship "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

After the church became so mixed with merely nominal professors, great care was necessary in receiving persons to communion. It was not enough that a person *said* he was converted and claimed admission into the church on the ground of his own statements: he must submit to be examined by experienced Christians. When one professes to be awakened to a sense of sin, and to be brought to repentance before God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, his confession must be examined by those who have gone through the same kind of experience themselves. And even where conversion is manifestly genuine, godly care, with tenderness, must be exercised in reception; something dishonouring to Christ, injurious to themselves, weakening to the assembly, may be entertained, even unconsciously. Herein spiritual discernment is needed. And this is the truest kindness to the applicant, and nothing more than

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a necessary care for the honour of Christ and the purity of communion. Christian fellowship would be at an end, if persons were received on the sole ground of their own opinion of themselves.

In Acts ix. we see the practical working of this principle in the case of the great apostle himself. And surely, if he could not be accredited without adequate testimony, who need complain? True, his case was peculiar, still it may be taken as a practical illustration of our subject.

We find both Ananias at Damascus, and the church at Jerusalem questioning the reality of Saul's conversion though it was a miraculous one. Of course he had been an open enemy to the name of Christ, and this would make the disciples still more careful. Ananias hesitates to baptize him until fully satisfied of his conversion. He consults the Lord on the subject; but after hearing His mind, he goes directly to Saul; assures him that he has been sent by the same Jesus that appeared to him on his way to Damascus; and confirms the truth of what had taken place. Saul is greatly comforted; he receives his sight, and is baptized.

Then as to the action of the church at Jerusalem, we read, "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." Paul is a model man to the church in many things, and in this also. He is received into the assembly—as all

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applicants should be received—on the ground of adequate testimony to the genuineness of his Christianity. But while all godly care must be taken that the Simon Maguses may be detected, all tenderness and patience must be exercised with the timid and doubting ones. Still, life in Christ and consistency therewith must be looked for. (See Rom. xiv., xv., and 1 Cor. v., and 2 Cor. ii.) The church's path is always a narrow one.

Popery has shewn its desperate wickedness in the evil use it has made of the church's prerogative to retain or remit sins, hence all the abominations of priestly absolution. Protestantism has gone to the other extreme—probably fearing the very appearance of popery—and has well-nigh set aside discipline altogether. The path of faith is to follow the word of the Lord.

The ground being thus cleared as to the great fundamental principles of the church and kingdom, we come to the day of Pentecost—the first moment of the church's history on earth. Unless we understand the principles of Christianity, we can never understand its history.

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CHAPTER II.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST FULLY COME.

The Jewish feast of Pentecost may be called the birthday of the christian church. It was also the anniversary of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, though it does not appear that a day was observed by the Jews, in commemoration of the event. Fifty days after our Lord's resurrection, the church was formed—its history commenced. The Old Testament saints form no part of the New Testament church. It had no existence in *fact* until the day of Pentecost.

All saints, from the beginning, have the same eternal life, they are the children of the same God and Father, and the same heaven will be their home for ever; but the Old Testament saints belong to another dispensation, or to the different dispensations which ran their course before Christ came. Each dispensation has its own rise, progress, decline, and fall, in scripture; and will have its own reflection in heaven. Neither persons nor dispensations will be undistinguished there. Hence the apostle in Hebrews xi., when speaking of the ancient worthies, says, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Surely if God has provided a *better thing* for us, it must also be a *different thing*. Let us not object to God's own word. Besides, our Lord, in Matthew xvi., says, "On this rock

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I will build my church." And at the same time, He gave the keys to Peter to open the doors of the new dispensation. *Then*, He had not begun to build His church, and the doors of the kingdom were not opened. But the difference between the *old* and the *new* will be more distinctly seen when we speak of the great events of the day of Pentecost. We begin with the types of Leviticus, chapter xxiii.

The children of Israel were commanded to bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of their harvest to the priest, that he might wave it before the Lord, to be accepted for them. This rite, we believe, shadowed forth our Lord's resurrection on the morning after the Jewish sabbath, and the Christian's acceptance before God in the risen Christ. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." See Matt. xxviii. and Mark xvi.

Seven full weeks after the waving of the sheaf, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated. The former was reckoned to be the first day of the harvest in Judea; the latter supposed the corn to be fully gathered in. Then they had a solemn festival of thanksgiving for "harvest home." Two loaves of bread, baken with the flour of the new harvest, characterized this festival. They were to be baken with *leaven*, and brought *out* of their habitations. Some have thought that the two loaves prefigured the *out-calling* of the church as composed of Jew and Gentile. Be this as it may, the *number* is significant. Two witnesses were necessary for a

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testimony in Israel. The leaven indicates, we doubt not, indwelling sin in the believer, and, of course, in the church, viewed in its time condition.

With the wave sheaf—beautiful type of the risen Christ, pure and holy—sacrifices of a sweet savour were offered; but no sacrifice for sin. With the two wave loaves—type of those who are Christ's—a sin-offering was presented. Sin, being there, a sin-offering was needed to cover it. Though the one perfect sacrifice of Christ answered to God for both indwelling sin, and the many actual sins of the life; still, as a matter of fact and experience, sin dwells in us: and will do so as long as we are in this world. All acknowledge this, though all may not see the completeness of the work of Christ. "The Christian has by one offering been perfected for ever, though he may humble himself and make confession to God for every failure."

The typical significance of Pentecost was remarkably fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Ghost. He came down to gather together the children of God that were scattered abroad. (John xi. 52.) By this great event, the system of Judaism was set aside, and the new vessel of testimony—the church of God—was introduced. And now, observe, the order of events. First,

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

INCARNATION, CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, are the great foundation truths, or facts, of the church—of Christianity. Incarnation was necessary to crucifixion, and both to resurrection. It is blessedly true that Christ died on the cross for our sins; but it is equally true, that the believer died in His death. (See Rom. vi., Col. ii.) The Christian's life is life in resurr ection. The

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church is built on the risen Christ. No truths can be more blessed and wonderful than incarnation and crucifixion; but the church is associated with Him who is risen and glorified.

In Acts i. we have that which is connected with the Lord's resurrection and ascension; and also with the actions of the apostles before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The blessed Lord, though in resurrection, still speaks and acts by the Holy Ghost. It was "*through the Holy Ghost*" that He gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen. This is worthy of special note as teaching us two things. 1. The character of our union with Christ; the Holy Ghost in the Christian, and in the risen Lord, joins them together. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." By the "one spirit" they are united. 2. This important fact points out the blessed truth of the Holy Ghost dwelling and acting in the Christian also after he is actually in resurrection. Then He will not —as He has now—have the flesh in us to contend against, but will, ungrieved and unhindered, lead us on to the full joys of heaven—the happy worship, the blessed service, and the whole will of God.

The risen Lord next exhorts the apostles to wait in Jersualem for "the promise of the Father," which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." It is no longer a question of temporal promises to Israel; that field must be left till a future day. The Father's promise of the Holy Ghost was an entirely different thing, and widely different in its results.

Several things "pertaining to the kingdom of God"

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having been spoken of between the Lord and His apostles, He ascends to heaven, and a cloud receives Him out of their sight. The Lord's return is also most plainly and distinctly taught at the same time. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." It is quite evident from these words, that He ascended *personally*, *visibly*, *bodily*, and that He shall so come again in like manner—that he will again appear beneath the heavens, and be manifested to people on the earth, personally, visibly, and bodily, but then it will be in power and great glory.

The apostles and disciples had now learnt two things. 1. That Jesus was taken up out of this world into heaven. 2. That He was coming back again into this world. On these two great facts their testimony was founded. But Jerusalem was to be the starting-point of their ministry, and they were to wait for power from above. We now come to the second great event, important beyond all others, with respect to man's condition in this world—the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now, it is to be, not only God *for* us, but God *in* us. This took place on the day of Pentecost.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The time was now fully come. Redemption was finished —God was glorified—Christ at His right hand in heaven,

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and the Holy Ghost come down to earth. God inaugurates the church; and this He does in a way suitable to His own wisdom, power, and glory. A mighty miracle is wrought, an outward sign is given. The great event is thus recorded.

Acts ii. "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" It may be well here to pause for a moment, and note a few things connected with the descent of the Holy Ghost and the display of His power on this important day.

There was, in the first place, the accomplishment of the Father's promise; the Holy Ghost Himself was sent down from heaven. This was the great truth of Pentecost. He came from above to dwell in the church—the place prepared for Him, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. There was also the fulfilment of the word of the Lord to the apostles, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Not that the disciples then knew the meaning of this word, but the fact was now accomplished. The full revelation of the doctrine of the "one body" awaited the ministrations of Paul; as he elsewhere says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Corinthians xii.

But further, besides the various gifts dispensed for the

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work of the Lord, we have something most blessedly personal, and quite new on the earth. The Holy Ghost Himself came down to dwell, not in the church only, but also in each individual who believed in the Lord Jesus. And, thank the Lord, this most blessed fact is as true to-day as it was then. He dwells now in every believer who rests on the finished work of Christ. The Lord had said, looking forward to this day, "For he dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you." These two grand aspects of the Spirit's presence were fully accomplished on the day of Pentecost. He came to dwell in each Christian and in the church. And now, blessed truth, we know that God is not only *for* us, but *in* us, and *with* us.

When "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power," He appeared in the form of a dove—beautiful emblem of the immaculate purity, of the meekness and lowliness, of Jesus. He was not to make His voice heard in the streets, or break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. But in the case of the disciples who were waiting at Jerusalem, it was altogether different. He descended on them in cloven tongues —tongues of fire; and sat upon each of them. This was characteristic. It was the power of God in testimony —a testimony that was to go forth, not only to all Israel, but to all the nations of the earth. The word of God was also to *judge* all that came before it—it was as *tongues of fire*. God's judgment on man because of sin had been judicially expressed in the cross, and now the solemn fact is to be made known, far and wide, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, grace reigns—reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus. Pardon is proclaimed to the guilty, salvation to the lost,

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peace to the troubled, and rest to the weary. All that believe are, and ever shall be, blessed *in* and *with* a risen and glorified Christ.

The astonishment and consternation of the Sanhedrim and the Jewish people must have been great indeed, at the re-appearance, in such power, of the followers of the crucified Jesus. They had doubtless concluded, that as the Master was now gone, the disciples could do nothing of themselves. For the most part, they were plain, uneducated men. But what must have been their amazement, when they heard that these plain men were preaching boldly in the streets of Jerusalem, and making converts by thousands to the religion of Jesus. Even historically viewed, the scene is full of the most thrilling interest, and has no parallel in the annals of time.

Jesus had been crucified; His claims to be the Messiah, in popular estimation, had been buried in His grave. The soldiers, who guarded His sepulchre, had been bribed to spread a false report as to His resurrection; the popular excitement had no doubt passed away, and the city, and temple worship, had returned to their former course, as if no great event had taken place. But on God's part, things were not to be thus quietly passed over. He was awaiting the appointed time to vindicate His Son, and to vindicate him in the very scene of His humiliation. This took place early in the morning on the day of Pentecost. Suddenly, and unexpectedly, His scattered followers re-appeared in miraculous power. They boldly charged the rulers and the people with the guilt of his apprehension, trial, and crucifixion—that they had killed their own Messiah; but that God had raised Him up, to be a Prince and a Saviour, and to set Him at His own right hand in

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heaven.* "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans v. 20.

The sentence of Babel, we may also say, was reversed on that wonderful day. In the different languages to which man had been doomed, in God's just displeasure, salvation is proclaimed. This mighty, marvellous work of God attracts the multitude. They are amazed, and speculate, as to this strange thing. Each one, in the language of the country from whence he came, hears from the lips of poor Galileans the wonderful works of God. The Jews who dwelt at Jerusalem, not understanding these foreign languages, mocked. Then Peter stood up, and declared to them in their own tongue, and proved from their own scriptures, the true character of what had taken place.

PETER'S FIRST APPEAL TO THE JEWS.

Thus we read: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of *every nation* under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear

* For fuller details, historically given, see *History of Christianity*, by Dean Milman, vol. i.

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them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day:" or, as we should reckon, nine in the morning—the hour of prayer in the temple.

Thus Peter takes the lead, and explains to the Jews, that the wonderful things they had seen and heard that morning, were not the result of excitement, but rather that which ought to have been looked for according to their own prophetic scriptures. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." But mark the *ground* on which Peter stands and preaches with such boldness. He stands on the ground of the *resurrection* and *exaltation* of Christ. This is carefully to be noted, as shewing the foundation on which the church rests, and when and where her history commences. This was the first day of her existence, the first page of her history, and the first triumphs of God's ineffable gift to man. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

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We quote the words of another, on the blessed effects of Peter's first sermon, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth.

"It was not merely a moral change, but a power which set aside all the motives which individualized those who had received it, by uniting them as one soul, and in one mind. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, they were in communion with each other, they broke bread, they spent their time in prayer, the sense of God's presence was powerful among them; and many signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles. They were united in the closest bonds; no man calling anything his own, but all divided their possessions with those that needed. They were daily in the temple, the public resort of Israel for religious exercises, whilst having their own apart, breaking bread at home daily. They ate with joy and gladness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people around them. Thus the assembly was formed, and the Lord added daily to it the remnant of Israel, who were to be saved from the judgments which should fall on a nation which had rejected the Son of God, their Messiah. God brought into the assembly—thus owned of Him by the presence of the Holy Ghost—those whom He spared in Israel. A new order of things had commenced, marked by the presence of the Holy Ghost. Here was found the presence and the house of God, although the old order of things still existed until the execution of the judgment.

"The assembly was formed, therefore, by the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, on the testimony that Jesus, who had been rejected, was raised up to heaven; being made of God both Lord and Christ. It was composed of the Jewish remnant who were to be

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spared, with the reserve of bringing in Gentiles whenever God should call them."*

This, then, is the church of God; a gathering together of those whom God has called to the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. Love rules and characterizes the newly formed assembly. The mighty victories which grace achieved on that memorable day fully attested the power of the exalted Lord, and the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. Three thousand souls were converted through one sermon. Those who had been the avowed enemies of the Lord, and who had participated in the guilt of His murder, agonized under the power of Peter's word. Alarmed at the awful thought of having killed their own Messiah, and that God, in whose presence they now were, had exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven, they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The Lord, in a certain sense, had sent the rod of His strength out of Zion, He was ruling in the midst of His enemies, and His people were made willing in the day of His power. Psalm cx.

Peter now seeks to deepen the good work in their souls—He seeks to humble the once proud and scornful Jews. "Repent," he says, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." He does not say simply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved;" though, of course, faith and repentance must go together wherever the work is genuine. But Peter, in this case, presses repentance. Their guilt had been great, and a deep moral work in the conscience was needful for their humbling. They must see their guilt

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. iv., p. 8.

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in the sight of God, and receive the remission of their sins at the feet of Him whom they had rejected and crucified. Nevertheless, all was grace. Their hearts were touched. They sided with God against themselves—they truly repented, were pardoned, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now they are the children of God and have eternal life: the Holy Ghost dwelt in them. The reality of the change was made manifest by a complete change of character. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Baptism, on the confession of faith; reception into the assembly; the Lord's supper; the fellowship of saints, and prayer; were their distinguishing observances. For the moment, the Lord's prayer, "that they all may be one," was answered, as we read in chapter iv., "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." We will now turn for the sake of connection, to chapter x.

THE CALLING IN OF THE GENTILES.

Cornelius, the centurion, a devout man, and those that were with him, are now received into the assembly of God. Peter had proclaimed their call in his first discourse. He is now summoned of God in a special way, and with special indications of His purpose, to open the door to those God-fearing Gentiles. Up to this time the assembly consisted chiefly, if not solely, of Jews. But God dealt tenderly with His ancient people, considering their national

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prejudices. "Cornelius was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." They could have no objection, personally, to receive such a one. Thus God is gracious, tender, and merciful. But no doubt was left on Peter's mind as to the divine will. God graciously silenced his reasonings, and overcame his unwillingness, with the mild reproof, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

Peter now proceeds, though slowly; it was a new kind of work for him. But nothing seems more surprising to Peter, than that the Gentiles should be brought into blessing, without either becoming Jews, or submitting to any Jewish ordinances. This, to Peter, to the Gentiles, and in itself, was an immense step. It strikes at the very root of Popery, Puseyism, Apostolic Succession, and every system of ordinances. In this fact a flood of light is shed on the character of the present dispensation. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." Clearly, it was no longer necessary to become a Jew, or submit to exernal rites and ceremonies, in order to enjoy the richest blessings of heaven. Without the imposition of apostolic hands—though Peter himself, in divine power and authority was present—and before being baptized with water, they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. While the word of God was falling from Peter's lips, the Holy Ghost fell on all who heard it. Before this, however, a blessed work, through God's grace, had been going on in the heart of Cornelius: he was a divinely quickened soul.

The *quickening* operations of the Spirit are quite

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distinct from being *sealed with* the Spirit. Before the Holy Ghost *can* seal, there must be something for Him *to* seal. He cannot seal our old nature; there must be a new nature for Him to seal—so that there must be a moment in every Christian's history, when he is quickened and not sealed; but sooner or later the work will be completed. (Eph. i. 13.) For example, the prodigal son was quickened, or converted, when he left the far country, but he was a stranger to the father's love and grace; and, consequently, had not yet the faith that calmly rests in Him as the source of all blessing. He was legal and unbelieving, though quickened. Certainly he was not sealed, or at rest, as to his pardon and acceptance, until he received the kiss of reconciliation, or, as some would say, the *ring*. The Gospel idea of *believing* is more than concern for the soul, however real. Christ-dishonouring unbelief may accompany, for a while, a genuine work of God's Spirit in the soul. The prodigal had a certain belief, that there was something good in his Father's heart, therefore he ventures to draw near. But surely this is short of the Gospel idea of faith. "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." This is faith; and wherever there is this faith, there is the seal of God. Paul himself was at least three days in the deepest exercise of soul, without the peace and rest which the sealing of the Holy Spirit gives. "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." (Acts ix.) But we return to the main point before us.

THE SEALING OF THE GENTILES.

Notice, then, this important fact connected with the bringing in of the Gentiles—they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, simply through the preaching of the word.

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At Jerusalem, the Jews were baptized before they received the Holy Ghost. At Samaria, the Samaritans were not only baptized, but had the apostles' hands laid on them, with prayer, before they received the Holy Ghost. But at Cæsarea, without baptism, without the laying on of hands, without prayer, the richest christian blessing was given to the Gentiles; though the *doctrine* of the church as the body of Christ was not yet revealed.

The grace of God, thus shewn to the Gentiles, at the commencement of the dispensation, has characterized it ever since. We are Gentiles; we are neither Jews nor Samaritans. Therefore, God's ways in grace, and His order of things with the Gentiles, have a special application to us. There is no instance recorded by the inspired historians of one being baptized without professing faith in Christ; but if we are to follow the pattern of things at Cæsarea, we must look for *sealing* as well as *quickening* —for *peace with God* as well as *faith in Christ* before baptism. The case of Cornelius stands at the very head of our dispensation; it was the first direct expression of grace to the Gentiles; and surely it ought to be a model for Gentile preachers and disciples. When the word of God which was *then* preached to Cornelius is *now* believed, the same effects, as to peace with God, we may rest assured, will follow.

Preaching, *believing*, *sealing*, *baptizing*, is the divine order of things here. God and His word never change; though "*times change*," as men say, and human opinions change, and religious observances change; but the word of God—*never*. Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans, professed faith in Christ before they were baptized. Indeed baptism supposed eternal life *possessed* through faith,

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not *communicated* by its observance, as Anglican catholics teach. "Grace is communicated, life is communicated, by sacraments," they say, "and is only effected through these means; irrespective of any exercise of the intellect on the part of the person brought into union. Holy baptism is the means of conferring on the recipient a new and spiritual life."* Such notions, we need scarcely say, are utterly opposed to scripture. Baptism, we affirm, *confers* nothing. *Life* is conferred by other means, as the scriptures plainly teach. Conversion, or "being born again," is effected, in all cases without exception, by the Holy Spirit. As we read in 1 Peter, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in *obeying the truth through the Spirit* unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Here, the truth of the Gospel is viewed as the *means*, and the Holy Spirit as the *power*, in conversion. Christ, or God in Christ, is the new object of the soul. It is by the Spirit and truth of God that this blessed change is effected. Those who trust to *water baptism* as the means of effecting it, trust, alas, to a great delusion—a fatal delusion.†

* *The Church and the World*, page 178—188.

† The following brief statements from the fathers of the fourth century, on the subject of baptism, will shew our readers the sources, or the authorities, of much that is said and done in the present day by the ritualists. The *authority* of scripture is entirely set aside. "At Easter, and at Pentecost, and in some places at the Epiphany, the rite of baptism was administered publicly—that is, in the presence of the faithful—to all the converts of the year, excepting those few instances in which it had been expedient to perform the ceremony without delay, or where

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In the case of the Gentiles, now under consideration, even more than life was possessed before baptism was

the timid Christian put it off till the close of life, after the example of Constantine: a practice for a long time condemned in vain by the clergy. But the fact of the delay shews how deeply the importance and efficacy of the rite were rooted in the christian mind. It was a complete lustration [purifying] of the soul. The Neophyte [new convert] emerged from the waters of baptism in a state of perfect innocence. The dove—the Holy Spirit—was constantly hovering over the font, and sanctifying the waters to the mysterious ablution of all the sins of the past life. If the soul suffered no subsequent taint, it passed at once to the realms of purity and bliss; that is, the heart was purified; the understanding illuminated; the spirit was clothed with immortality.

"Robed in white, emblematic of spotless purity, the candidate approached the baptistery—in the larger churches a separate building. There he uttered the solemn vows which pledged him to his religion. The symbolizing genius of the East added some significant ceremonies. The Catechumen [one in the first stages of christian instruction] turned to the West, the realm of Satan, and thrice renounced his power; he turned to the East, to adore the Sun of Righteousness, and to proclaim his compact with the Lord of life. The mystic trinal number prevailed throughout; the vow was threefold, and thrice pronounced. The baptism was usually by immersion; the stripping off the clothes was emblematic of 'putting off the old man;' but baptism by sprinkling was allowed, according to the exigency of the case. The water itself, became, in the vivid language of the church, the blood of Christ: it was compared, by a fanciful analogy, to the Red Sea: the daring metaphors of some of the fathers might seem to assert a transmutation of its colour.

"Almost all the fathers of this age, Basil, the two Gregories, Ambrose, &c., &c., have treatises on baptism; and vie, as it were, with each other in their praises of its importance and efficacy. Gregory of Nazianzen almost exhausts the copiousness of the Greek language in speaking of baptism."—*Milman's History of Christianity*, vol. iii.

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administered. *They had the seal of God.* Baptism is the sign of full deliverance and salvation as secured for the believer by the death and resurrection of Christ. Cornelius had life, was a devout man, but he must send for Peter, and hear words whereby he would be saved—fully delivered. The Old as well as the New Testament teaches this blessed truth most plainly. Israel, as a typical people, after being brought to God and sheltered by the blood of the lamb in Egypt, were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Thus they were *delivered* out of Egypt, and saw the *salvation* of Jehovah. Again, Noah and his family were saved *through* the flood—*not by it.* They left the old world, passed through the waters of death, and landed in a new condition of things altogether. The like figure, or antitype, whereunto even baptism doth also now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Exodus xiv.; 1 Peter iii. 21.

But what was the word, some may inquire, that Peter preached, which was accompanied with such remarkable blessing? He preached peace by Jesus Christ, as Lord of all. Christ risen, exalted, and glorified, was the grand object of his testimony. He sums up with these words: "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*" The blessing follows. The Jews present were astonished; but they bow, and own God's goodness to the Gentiles. "*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then Peter*

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answered, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded that they should be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."

We now retrace our steps a little way, and notice some of the leading events, which, in order, precede chapter x.

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.

STEPHEN, the deacon and evangelist, is the first to receive the crown of martyrdom for the name of Jesus. He stands at the head of "the noble army of martyrs." He is perfect as a type—as the *proto-martyr*. Firm and unwavering in his faith; bold and undaunted before his accusers; pointed and faithful in his defence before the Sanhedrim; free from malice in his strongest statements; full of charity towards all men, he seals his testimony with his blood, and falls asleep in Jesus.

In some respects, Stephen resembles the blessed Lord Himself. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," is like "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and again, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," resembles "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" only Stephen does not plead their ignorance.

Already we see that troubles both within and without assail the young assembly. True, the word of God increased, multitudes were converted, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. But the Grecians, or Hellenists (Jews of Greek origin), murmured against the Hebrews (natives of Judea), because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. This led to the appointment of seven deacons. (Acts vi.) From their

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names here given it would appear that the seven chosen were "Grecians"—all from the side of the murmurers; thus the Spirit of God ruled in grace. Stephen was one of the number; and in his case the word of the apostle was exemplified: "Those who have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." He was full of faith and power, and did great wonders and miracles among the people. The energy of the Holy Spirit was especially manifested in Stephen.

There were different synagogues in Jerusalem, appropriated to the different races of Jews. It was the synagogue of the Libertines, Cyrenians, &c., that opposed Stephen. But "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." Then followed that which has usually been the case with the confessors of Jesus in all ages; unable to answer him, they accuse him before the Council. False witnesses are suborned, who swear that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God; and that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy this place, and change the customs delivered to them by Moses." The case was now before the Sanhedrim—the trial commences. But what must his judges have thought when they saw his face radiant, as the face of an angel?

We have the noble address of Stephen to the heads of the nation before us. To them, it was convincing, perplexing, overwhelming. Doubtless, it was the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the Jews, from the mouth of Stephen; and all the more humbling to the proud Jews, to hear their doom from the lips of a Hellenist. But the Spirit of God, when unhindered by man's arrangements, works by whomsoever *He* will.

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Stephen recapitulates in bold language the chief points in their national history. He refers especially to the history of Joseph and of Moses. The former, their fathers sold to the Gentiles; the latter, they despised as a ruler and a judge. He also charges them with always resisting the Holy Ghost—with always disobeying the law; and now with having been the betrayers and murderers of the *Just One*. Here Christ's faithful witness was interrupted. He was not allowed to finish his address. A picture, too true, of the treatment of martyrs, from that day even until now. The murmurs, the indignation, the fury of the Sanhedrim, were beyond control. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." But in place of pursuing his discourse, he turns in ecstasy of heart to the Lord, and fixes his eyes on heaven—the home and centre of gathering for all His people.

"I see," said Stephen, "the heavens opened." He was full of the Holy Ghost—heaven opens to him, and he sees the Son of man standing there, ready to receive his spirit. "Such, then," as another has said, "is the position of the true believer—heavenly upon the earth—in presence of the world that rejected Christ, the murderous world; the believer, alive in death, sees by the power of the Holy Ghost into heaven, and the Son of man at the right hand of God. Stephen does not say, 'Jesus.' The Spirit characterizes Him as 'the Son of man.' Precious testimony to man! It is not to the glory that he testifies, but to the Son of man in the glory; heaven being open to him. . . . As to the object of faith and the position of the believer, this scene is definitively characteristic."

"Foremost and nearest to His throne,
By perfect robes of triumph known,

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And likest Him in look and tone,
The holy Stephen kneels,
With steadfast gaze, as when the sky
Flew open to his fainting eye,
Which like a fading lamp flashed high,
Seeing what death conceals.

"He, though he seem on earth to move,
Must glide in air like gentle dove,
From yon unclouded depths above
Must draw his purer breath:
Till men behold his angel face
All radiant with celestial grace,
Martyr all o'er, and meet to trace
The lines of Jesus' death."

We have now gone over, with some care, the first section of the church's history. And we have been the more careful, as church histories, in general, commence at a later period. Most of them begin where scripture ends; at least as to details. None that we have yet seen refer to Matthew xvi., and few attempt a critical examination of the Acts of the Apostles, which, after all, is the only part of her history which commands our faith, and has an absolute claim upon our obedience.

In chapter viii. we find the Holy Ghost in Samaria working by Philip. He has, as it were, left Jerusalem. This marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church; and especially in her connection with Jerusalem. We leave, for the present, the enraged and persecuting Jews, and follow the path of the Spirit to the city of Samaria. But we must glance for a moment at what some have called the *third persecution*.

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CHAPTER III.

THE DISCIPLES PERSECUTED AND SCATTERED.

After the death of Stephen, a great persecution broke out. (Acts viii.) The Jewish leaders appear to have gained a victory over the disciples, and they determined to pursue their apparent triumph with the utmost violence. But God, who is above all, and who knows how to restrain the rising passions of men, overruled their opposition for the accomplishment of His own will.

Man had not yet learnt the truth of the proverb, that "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." In the case of the first and the noblest of martyrs, the proverb was fully verified. But all these eighteen hundred years, men have been slow to learn, or believe, this plain historical fact. Persecution, generally speaking, has advanced the cause which it sought to repress. This will be found true in the main, under every form of opposition and persecution. Resistance, decision, and firmness are created by such treatment. True, timid minds may be driven to apostasy for a time, by persecution; but how often have such, with the deepest repentance, and in order to regain their former position, endured with cheerfulness the greatest sufferings, and displayed in their last moments the greatest fortitude! But persecution, in one form or another, is to be expected by the followers of Jesus. They are exhorted to take up their cross *daily* and follow Him. It tests the sincerity of our faith—the purity of our

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motives—the strength of our affection for Christ, and the measure of our confidence in Him.

Those who are not true in heart for Christ will be sure to fall away in a time of sharp persecution. But love can *endure* for its object, when it can do nothing else. We see this *perfectly* in the blessed Lord Himself. He *endured* the cross—that was of God: He *despised* the shame—that was of man. It was amidst the shame and sufferings of the cross that the full strength of His love appeared, and that He triumphed over everything. Nothing could turn His love aside from its object; it was stronger than death. In this, as in all things, He has left us an example, that we should walk in His steps. May we ever be found following hard after Him!

From the history of the church in the Acts, we learn, that the effect of the martyrdom of Stephen was the immediate spread of the truth, which his persecutors were seeking to hinder. The impressions produced by such a witness, and such a death, must have been overwhelming to his enemies, and convincing to the unprejudiced and the thoughtful. The last resort of human cruelty is death: but, wonderful to say, christian faith, in its first trial, was proved to be stronger than death, and that in its most frightful form. This the enemy witnessed, and would ever after remember. Stephen was on the *Rock*, and the gates of hell could not prevail against Him.

The whole church at Jerusalem, on this occasion, were scattered abroad; but they went everywhere preaching the word. Like the cloud that flies before the wind, bearing its refreshing rain to thirsty lands, so the disciples were driven from Jerusalem by the storm of persecution, bearing the living waters to thirsty souls in distant lands. "And at that time there was a great persecution against

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the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Some historians have thought, that the fact of the apostles remaining in Jerusalem, when the disciples fled, proves their greater firmness and faithfulness in the cause of Christ; but we are disposed to judge differently, and to consider it *failure* rather than *faithfulness*. The Lord's commission to them was, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And they were also told, "When they persecute you in one city, flee into another." As far as scripture history informs us, the commission was never carried out by the twelve. Nevertheless, God was mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles, and in Peter towards the Jews.

The Holy Spirit now leaves Jerusalem, as to outward manifest power—most solemn truth! But that guilty city preferred the patronage of Rome to the resurrection-power of their own Messiah. "What do we?" said the Jews, "for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." They rejected the Messiah in His humiliation, and now they reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit to His exaltation. Their iniquity was full, and wrath was coming on them to the uttermost. But, for the present, our happier place, in tracing the history of the church, is to follow the Holy Spirit on His way to Samaria. His path is the *silver line* of saving grace in precious souls.

THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA.

Philip, the deacon, evidently next to Stephen in zeal and energy, goes down to Samaria. The Holy Spirit

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works with him. In the wisdom of the Lord's ways, *despised* Samaria is the first place, outside of Judea, where the Gospel was preached by His chosen witnesses. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city." A great many believed and were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon Magus, the sorcerer, owned the presence of a power far above his own, and bowed to the force and current of the Spirit's work in others, though the truth had not penetrated his own heart or conscience. But as we have now travelled to another part of the country, this may be the fitting place to say a word as to its history.

The Holy Land, interesting beyond all other nations of the earth, both morally and historically, is in size very small. "It is but a strip of country, about the size of Wales, less than 140 miles in length, and barely 40 in average breadth."* The northern portion is Galilee; the centre, Samaria; the south, Judea. But though *physically* so small, it has been the theatre of the most momentous events in the world's history. There the Saviour was born, lived, and was crucified—and there He was buried and rose again. And there, too, His apostles and martyrs lived, testified, and suffered; and there the first gospel sermon was preached, and there the first church was planted.

The land originally occupied by Israel, lay between the ancient empires of Assyria and Egypt. Hence the frequent reference in the Old Testament to "the king of the North,"

* Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible.*

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and the "king of the South." Owing to this position, it was often the battle field of these mighty empires; and we know it will yet be the scene of their last and deadly conflict. (Dan. xi.) So superstitious have men been about the Holy Land, that it has been the object of national ambition, and the occasion of religious wars, almost ever since the days of the apostles. Who could estimate the blood that has been shed, and the treasure that has been wasted, on these sacred plains?—and all, we may add, under the fair name of religious zeal, or rather, under the banners of the cross and the crescent. Thither the pilgrims in every age have travelled, that they might worship at the holy sepulchre, and fulfil their vow. It has also been the great attraction for travellers of all characters and of all nations; and the great emporium for miracle-working relics. The Christian, the historian, and the antiquarian have searched it diligently, and made known their discoveries. Ever since the days of Abraham, it has been the most interesting and attractive spot on the earth's surface. And to the student of prophecy, its future history is even more interesting than its past. He knows that the day is coming, when the whole land shall be peopled by the twelve tribes of Israel, and filled with the glory and majesty of their Messiah. Then shall they be owned as the metropolitan people of the earth. We now return to Samaria, with its new life and joy.

The Samaritans through God's blessing, readily believed the Gospel, as preached by Philip. The effects of the truth, thus received in simplicity, were immediate and of the most blessed character. "There was great joy in that city," and many were baptized. Such must ever be the effects of the Gospel, when believed, unless there be some hindrance in connection with ourselves. Where

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there is genuine simplicity of faith, there must be genuine peace and joy, and happy obedience. The power of the Gospel, over a people who had for ages resisted the claims of Judaism, was thus displayed. What the law could not do, in this respect, the Gospel accomplished. "Samaria was a 'conquest,'" as one has said, "which all the energy of Judaism had never been able to make. It was a new and splendid triumph of the Gospel. The spiritual subjugation of the world appertained to the church."

JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA UNITED BY THE GOSPEL.

The bitter jealousy that existed between Jews and Samaritans, had long been proverbial; hence we read, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." But now, in connection with the Gospel of peace, this root of bitterness disappears. Nevertheless, in the wisdom of God's ways, the Samaritans must wait for the highest blessing of the Gospel, until the Jewish believers—the apostles from the church at Jerusalem—lay their hands on them, and offer up prayer for them. Nothing can be more deeply interesting than this fact, when we take into consideration the religious rivalry that had been so long manifested by both. Had not Samaria received this timely lesson of humility, she might have been disposed, once more, to maintain her proud independency of Jerusalem. But the Lord would not have it so. The Samaritans had believed, rejoiced, and were baptized, but they had not received the Holy Ghost. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

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Identification is the great idea of the laying on of hands, and *unity* is the great idea of the gift of the Holy Ghost. These are immense facts in connection with the progress of the church. Samaria is thus brought into happy association with her ancient rival, and made one with the church at Jerusalem. There is no thought in God's mind of the one assembly being independent of the other. Had they been each blessed separately and independently, their rivalry might have been greater than ever. But it was to be no longer: "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem," but *one Head in heaven, one body on earth, one Spirit, one redeemed family, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.*"*

For the origin of the mixed people and worship of Samaria, see 2 Kings xvii. They were but half Jews, though they boasted of their relation to Jacob. They received the five books of Moses as sacred, but undervalued the rest of the Bible. They were circumcised, kept the law after a sort, and were expecting a Messiah to come. The personal visit of the blessed Lord to Samaria is of the deepest and most touching interest. (John iv.) The well at which He rested, it is said, "lay in a valley between the two famous mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, on which the law was read. On the latter height stood the rival temple of the Samaritans, which had so long afflicted the more zealous Jews by its daring opposition to the one chosen sanctuary on Mount Moriah."

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH RECEIVES THE GOSPEL.

Philip is now called to leave his happy and interesting work at Samaria, and go down to Gaza—a wilderness;

* See Lecture vi., on Acts ii., viii., x., xix. *Lectures on the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.* By W. Kelly.

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and preach the Gospel there to a single person. Surely there is a lesson for the evangelist in this fact, of the deepest importance, and one that must not be passed over without a brief notice.

The preacher, in such a scene of awakening and conversion as there was at Samaria, necessarily becomes greatly interested in the work. God is setting His seal on the ministry of the word, and sanctioning the meetings with His presence. The work of the Lord prospers. The evangelist is surrounded with respect and affection, and his children in the faith naturally look up to him for further light and instruction as to their path. How can he leave such a field of labour? many will inquire—would it be right to leave it? Only, we reply, if the Lord called His servant to do so, as He did in the case of Philip. But how is he to know *now*, seeing that angels and the Spirit do not speak to him as they did to Philip? Though not spoken to in this way, he ought to look for and expect divine guidance. Faith must be his guide. Circumstances are unsafe as a guide; they may rebuke and correct us in our path, but the eye of God must be our guide. "I will guide thee with mine eye," is the promise; "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." Psalm xxxii.

The Lord only knows what is best for His servant and for His work. The evangelist in such a scene would be in danger of feeling his own personal importance. Hence the necessity of changing the place of service.

"Arise," said the angel of the Lord to Philip, "and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went; and, behold a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who

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had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Acts viii. 26–40.

The immediate and unquestioning obedience of Philip at this time is beautiful. He raises no question as to the difference between Samaria and Gaza—between leaving a wide field of labour, and going away to a desert place, to speak to *one person* about salvation. But the Spirit of God was with Philip. And the one desire of the evangelist should ever be, to follow the leading of the Spirit. From the want of spiritual discernment, a preacher may remain in a place after the Spirit has ceased to work in it, and so labour in vain.

God, in His providence, takes care of His servant; He sends an angel to direct him as to the road he is to take. But when it is a question of the Gospel and dealing with souls, the Spirit takes the direction. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." We know of nothing, in the whole history of the church, more interesting than this scene on the way to Gaza. The angel and the Spirit of God accompany the evangelist: the former representing the providence of God in marking out the very road he is to take; the latter representing spiritual power in direct dealing with souls. As it was then, so is it now; though we are more in the habit of thinking of the guidance of the Spirit, than of the direction of Providence. May we trust God for everything! He changes not.

The Gospel now finds its way, in the person of the queen's treasurer, to the centre of Abyssinia. The eunuch believes, is baptized, and goes on his way rejoicing. What

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he sought for in vain in Jerusalem, and had taken a long journey to seek there, he finds in the desert. Beautiful instance of the grace of the Gospel! The lost sheep is found in the wilderness, and living waters spring up in the desert. He is also a beautiful instance of an anxious soul. When alone and unemployed, he reads the prophet Isaiah. He muses on the prophecy of the suffering, unresisting Lamb of God. But the moment of light and deliverance had come. Philip explains the prophet—the eunuch is taught of God—he believes—immediately desires baptism, and returns to his home, filled with the new joys of salvation. Would he be silent there, as to what he had found? Certainly not; a man of such character and influence would have many opportunities of spreading the truth. But as both scripture and history are silent, as to the results of his mission, we venture not further.

The Spirit is still seen in company with Philip. He carries him far away. He is found at Azotus. He evangelizes all the cities unto Cæsarea.

A new era in the church's history begins to dawn. A new workman enters the scene, and the most remarkable in many ways that ever served the Lord and His church.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS.

No event in the progress of the church so deeply, or so blessedly, affects her after history, as the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. From being the chief of sinners, he became the chief of saints—from being the most violent opposer of Christ, he became the most zealous defender of the faith—as a hater and persecutor of the name of Jesus on the earth, he was "chief;" all others, compared with him, were subordinate. Acts ix.; 1 Timothy i.

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It is quite evident, from what he says of himself, that he believed Judaism, not only to be divine, but to be God's perpetual and unchangeable religion to man. It would be difficult to account for the strength of his Jewish prejudices on any other principle. Therefore all attempts to set aside the Jews' religion, and to introduce another, he considered to be of the enemy, and to be strenuously opposed. He had heard the noble speech of Stephen—he had witnessed his triumphant death; but his subsequent persecution of the Christians shewed that the moral glory of that scene had made no serious impression on his mind. He was blinded by zeal, but zeal for Judaism now was zeal against the Lord. At this very time, he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

Hearing that some of the persecuted saints had found a shelter in Damascus, an ancient city of Syria, he was determined to go there, and bring them back to Jerusalem, as criminals. For this purpose, he received letters from the high priest and the estate of the elders, that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem to be punished. (Acts xxii., xxvi.) He thus became the very apostle of Jewish malice against the disciples of Jesus. Ignorantly, no doubt, but he made himself their willing missionary.

With his mind wrought up to the most violent pitch of persecuting zeal, he sets forth on his memorable journey. Unshaken in his ardent attachment to the religion of Moses, and determined to punish the converts to Christianity, as apostates from the faith of their ancestors, he approaches Damascus. But there, in the full energy of his mad career, the Lord Jesus stops him. A light from heaven, above the light of the sun, shines around

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him, and overwhelms him in its dazzling brightness. He falls to the earth—broken in will, subdued in mind, humbled in spirit, and altogether changed. His heart is now subject to the voice that speaks to him; he owns its power and authority. Reasoning, extenuation, self-justification, have no place in the presence of the Lord.

A voice from the excellent glory had said unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Thus, the Lord Jesus, though in heaven, declares Himself to be still identified with His disciples on the earth. The oneness of the church with Jesus, its Head in heaven, the germ of the blessed truth of the "one body," is folded up in these few words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me?* . . . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." To be at war with the saints, is to be at war with the Lord Himself. Blessed truth for the believer, awfully solemn for the persecutor!

The vision Saul had seen, and the terrible discovery he had made, completely engross him. He is blind for three days, and can neither eat nor drink. Thus he enters Damascus! blind, broken, humbled, beneath the solemn judgment of the Lord! How different to what he had intended! He now joins himself to the company which he had resolved to exterminate. Nevertheless, he enters in by the door, and humbly takes his place with the disciples of the Lord. Ananias, a godly disciple, is sent to comfort him. He receives his sight, he is filled with the Holy Ghost, he is baptized, he receives meat and is strengthened.

It is the thought of some, that the Lord gives in the conversion of Saul, not only a sample of His long-suffer-

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ing, as in every sinner that is saved, but as a sign of the future restoration of Israel. Paul tells us himself, that he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief; and this is the very ground of mercy for Israel in the latter day. As our Lord Himself prayed for them:—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Peter also, says, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Acts iii. 17.

But as the apostleship of Paul differs in many respects from that of the twelve, it will be necessary to notice it briefly. Unless this difference is understood, the true character of the present dispensation will be but feebly apprehended.

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PAUL.

The LAW and the PROPHETS were until JOHN; after John the LORD Himself, in His own Person, offers the kingdom to Israel; but "his own received him not." They crucified the Prince of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. We have next THE TWELVE APOSTLES. They are endued with the Holy Ghost, and bear witness to the resurrection of Christ. But the testimony of the twelve is despised, the Holy Ghost is resisted, Stephen is martyred, the final offer of mercy is rejected, and now the Lord's dealings with Israel as a people, close for a season. The scenes of Shiloh are enacted over again, Ichabod is written on Jerusalem, and a new witness is called out, as in the days of Samuel.

THE GREAT APOSTLE of the Gentiles now comes before

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us. He is as one born out of due time and out of due place. His apostleship had nothing to do with Jerusalem, or with the twelve. It was outside of both. His call was extraordinary and direct from the Lord in heaven. He is privileged to bring out the new thing, the heavenly character of the church—that Christ and the church are one, and that heaven is their common home. (Eph. ii.) So long as God was dealing with Israel these blessed truths were kept a secret in His own mind. "Unto me," says Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Ephesians iii.

There could be no doubt, from the *character* of the apostle's call, as to its divine authority. "Not of men, neither by man," as he says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." That is—it was "not of men," as to its source—not of any *synod* of official men. "Neither by man" was it, as to the medium through which his commission came. He was not only a saint, but an apostle, by calling: and that call was by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. In some respects, his apostleship was even of a higher order than that of the twelve. *They* had been called by Jesus when on the earth, *he* had been called by the *risen* and *glorified* Christ in heaven. And, his call being thus from heaven, he wanted neither the sanction nor the recognition of the other apostles. "But when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach

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him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." Galatians i. 15, 16.

The *manner* of Saul's call to be an apostle is worthy of special note, as it struck at the root of Jewish pride, and may also be viewed as the deathblow to the vain notion of apostolic succession. The apostles, whom the Lord had chosen and appointed when He was on the earth, were neither the source nor the channel, in any way, of Saul's appointment. They did not cast lots for him, as they did in the case of Matthias. Then, they were scarcely off Jewish ground, which may account for their deciding by lot. It was an ancient form in Israel of discovering the divine will in such matters. But these emphatic words, "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ," completely exclude the intervention of man in every shape and way. Apostolic succession is set aside. We are *saints by calling* and *servants by calling*. And that call must come from heaven. Paul stands before us, as the true pattern for all preachers of the Gospel, and for all ministers of the word. Nothing can be more simple than the ground he takes as a preacher, great apostle though he was. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; *we also believe and therefore speak.*" 2 Corinthians iv. 13.

Immediately after he was baptized and strengthened, he began to confess his faith in the Lord Jesus, and to preach in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. This is a new thing. Peter preached that He had been

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exalted to the right hand of God—that He had been made both Lord and Christ; but Paul preaches the higher doctrine of His personal glory—"that he is the Son of God." In Matthew xvi., Christ is revealed by the Father to the disciples, as "the Son of the living God." But now He is revealed, not only *to* Paul, but in Paul. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me," he says. But who is sufficient to speak of the privileges and blessings of those to whom the Son of God is thus revealed? The dignity and security of the church rest on this blessed truth; and also the Gospel of the glory, which was especially entrusted to Paul, and which he calls "my gospel."

"On the Son thus revealed within," as one has sweetly said, "hangs everything that is peculiar to the calling and glory of the church—her holy prerogatives—acceptance in the Beloved, with forgiveness of sins through His blood—entrance into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so as to have made known to us the mystery of the will of God—future inheritance in and with Him in whom all things in heaven and earth are to be gathered—and the present seal and earnest of this inheritance is the Holy Ghost. This bright roll of privileges is inscribed by the apostle, thus—'spiritual blessings in the heavenlies;' and so they are; blessings through the Spirit flowing from and linking us with Him who is the Lord in the heavens."* Ephesians i. 3–14.

But the *doctrine* of the church—this mystery of love, and grace, and privilege—was not revealed until Paul

* See fuller details on this subject, by J. G. B., *Christian Witness*, vol. iv. page 221; and by W. K., *Lectures on Galatians*, chap. i.

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declared it. The Lord had spoken of it as that which the presence of the Comforter was to effect, saying, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." And again, when He said to the disciples after the resurrection, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." Of this "bright roll" of blessing Paul was especially and characteristically the apostle.

We must now leave the history of Saul for a little, and turn to Peter, who occupies the field until Saul commences his public ministry in Acts xiii.

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CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST MISSIONARIES OF THE CROSS.

In place of going over consecutively the remaining chapters of the Acts, we think it may be more interesting, and equally instructive to our readers, to consider them in connection with the history of the apostles, especially with the history of the two *great* apostles. The book of the Acts is almost entirely occupied with the acts of Peter and of Paul—though, of course, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost—the one, as the great apostle of the Jews; the other, as the great apostle of the Gentiles. But we would also embrace the present opportunity, to record the names, in our short history, and briefly to notice, the first personally chosen companions and missionaries of our blessed Lord—the twelve apostles.

But before attempting an outline of these interesting lives, it may be well to state the object we have in view in doing so. We are stepping a little out of the usual course. In none of the Church Histories that we know, are the lives of the apostles presented in a regular form; and we think it strange that the great founders of the church should have no place in its history. We have also noticed with some surprise that most of the histories close with the commencement of the Reformation. Surely this is the brightest day in her history—at least since the days of Constantine—and the one above all others in which the Spirit of God wrought mightily;

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and thus ought to be the most special part of her history.

At the same time, with regard to the apostles, we have to bear in mind, that beyond the sacred narrative, there is very little known that can be relied upon. The traditional and the scriptural, the certain and the uncertain, are almost hopelessly blended together in the writings of the Fathers. Every distinct ray of historical light we greatly value, but it is only to the scriptures that we can turn with certainty. Still, the few scattered notices which we have there, of some of the apostles, with what may be gathered elsewhere, when brought together may give the reader a view of the person and individuality of the apostle, which he never had before. Others, of note, besides the apostles, will come before us in connection with them, especially with Paul; so that our readers will have, in a convenient form, a brief outline of nearly all the noble preachers, teachers, confessors, and martyrs of the Lord Jesus spoken of in the New Testament.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John (sons of Zebedee), Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (the son Alpheus), Thaddeus, Simon Zelotes, Matthias, who was chosen in place of Judas Iscariot. See Matthew x.; Luke vi.; Mark iii.

Paul was also an apostle by the Lord's direct call, and that in the highest sense, as we have seen. There were others who were called apostles, but they were more especially the apostles of the churches. The twelve, and Paul, were pre-eminently the apostles of the Lord. Compare 2 Corinthians viii. 23; Philippians ii. 25; Romans xvi. 7.

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The official name, "apostle," signifies one "sent forth." "These twelve Jesus *sent forth.*" This name was given to the twelve by the Lord Himself. "He called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he called apostles." A personal acquaintance with the whole ministerial course of the Lord, was the original and a necessary qualification of an apostle. This was stated by Peter before the election of a successor to the traitor Judas. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." By this close personal intercourse with the Lord, they were particularly suited to be the witnesses of His earthly path. He describes them Himself as "they which have continued with me in my temptations." Luke xxii. 28.

The *number* twelve, we believe, distinctly marks their relation to the twelve tribes of Israel. The fancies of the Fathers, as to the meaning of the *number* here chosen, shew how little their minds were governed by the immediate context. St. Augustine "thinks our Lord herein had respect to the four quarters of the world, which were to be called by the preaching of the Gospel, and which, being multiplied by three, as denoting the Trinity, make twelve." From not seeing the distinction between Israel and the church, there is no end of confusion in such writers.

The number twelve in scripture, we understand to mean *administrative completeness in man.* Hence the twelve tribes, and the twelve apostles, and the promise to the latter, that they should sit upon twelve thrones,

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judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt. xix. 28.) But here, in plainest terms, the Lord limits the mission of the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were not even to visit the Samaritans, nor to go in the way of the Gentiles. The mission was strictly Jewish. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Surely nothing could possibly be plainer. The calling out of the church is not here referred to. That took place after, when another and an extraordinary apostle was chosen, and with a special view to the Gentiles. *Then* the twelve would have their own place in the church, but Paul was its divinely called and qualified minister.

The general notion that the twelve were altogether illiterate, we cannot agree with. The expression "unlearned and ignorant men," as used by the council in Acts iv. 13, we understand as simply denoting persons in private stations of life, who had not been taught in the rabbinical learning and traditions of the Jews. Our term "laymen" would convey the same idea; that is, men of ordinary education, as contrasted with those who have been specially trained in the schools of the learned; or men not in "holy orders." But Peter and John may have been thoroughly acquainted with the holy scriptures, and with the history of their country and people, and yet be considered by the council as "unlearned and ignorant men." James and John at least had all the advantages of a godly and devoted mother's training, which has often done great things for the church of God.

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We will now glance briefly at the twelve, and first in order is the apostle

PETER. There can be no doubt that Peter held the first place among the twelve. The Lord gave him this place. He is first named in every list of the apostles. This precedence, we know, did not arise from his having known the Lord first. He was neither first nor last in this respect. Andrew, and probably John, knew the Lord before Peter. Let us here note, with deepest interest, the first meeting of those friends who were to be united for ever. See John i. 29–51.

John the Baptist bears testimony to Jesus as the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world. Two of John's disciples leave him and go with Jesus. "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, *We have found the Messias*, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." This was Peter's first introduction to the Lord—to one who was to be the source of his happiness for ever. And how significant their first interview! "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." Naturally impulsive, quick in seizing an object, but too ready to relinquish it by the force of another impression, the Lord in grace gives him *firmness;* though every now and then his natural character shines out.

The first thing that brings Peter into great prominence is his noble confession of Christ, as the Son of the living God. (Matt. xvi.) The Lord then honoured him with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and gave him the

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chief place among his brethren. But this part of Peter's history, with some of the early chapters of the Acts, we have already considered ; therefore we will only refer to what has not been touched upon.

The fourth chapter of the Acts we have not alluded to ; and we are disposed to think that it presents the brightest day in the apostle's history, as the baptism of Cornelius presents the crowning day in his ministry. As there is often displayed in the great apostle a mixture of strength and weakness, of excellencies and defects, it is deeply interesting to trace his path through the first storms which assailed the infant church. But we must not forget that the grand secret of the boldness, wisdom, and power of the apostles, was not owing to their natural character, but to the presence of the Holy Ghost. He was *with* them and *in* them, and working *by* them. The Holy Ghost was the strength of their testimony.

Notice in particular the blessed effects of His presence in *four* distinct aspects. 1. In the *courage* displayed by Peter and the others. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel ; if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The great and solemn question between God and the rulers of Israel is here *formally*

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stated. Nothing can be plainer. The testimony of God is no longer with the rulers of the temple, but with the apostles of the exalted Messiah.

2. In His presence *with* the disciples as an assembly. "And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word with boldness." This verse clearly teaches what has been so often said, as to the Spirit being *with* the disciples and *in* them. The place was *shaken* where they were assembled together; this proves His presence *with* them. But they were also *filled* with the Holy Ghost—so filled, we believe, that, for the time being, there was no room for the flesh to act.

3. In *great power* as to service. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Readiness and energy now characterize the apostles.

4. In whole-hearted *devotedness.* "As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet." In chapter ii. the rich gave to the poor themselves: a thing which can scarcely be done without adding importance to the giver. But in chapter iv., the rich laid their money at the apostles' feet. This fact we would accept as a sure sign of increased humility, and of greater devotedness.

It is also in this full and instructive chapter that we have the famous answer of Peter and John to the council. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." From that day until now, the true confessors of the name of Jesus have found in these words a suitable answer to their

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inquisitors and oppressors. What a difference, we may exclaim, between the man who sat by the fire in the hall of the high priest, and the man who takes the lead in Acts iv.—between the man who fell before the assault of a maid, and the man who makes a nation tremble with his appeals! But how is the difference to be accounted for? some may ask. The presence and power of an ungrieved, unquenched Holy Spirit explains it fully. And the weakness or power of many in our day, is to be accounted for on the same principle. The Spirit of God alone is power in the Christian. May we know the blessedness of living, walking, working, in the saving and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit! "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephesians iv. 30.

We are now come to the last section in the sacred narrative of the history of Peter. From verse 32 of chapter ix. to verse 18 of chapter xi., we have an account of his preaching, and working miracles. There we see him once more in full apostolic authority, and the Holy Ghost working with him. His mission at this time was greatly blessed, both in the towns of Israel, and at Cæsarea. The whole town of Lydda and the district of Saron appear to have been awakened. The miracles which Peter wrought, and the Gospel which He preached, were used of God for the conversion of many. Thus we read, "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord." The blessing was general. "Turning to the Lord," is the scriptural idea of conversion. And at Joppa also, through the raising of Dorcas, there was a great stir and great blessing. "Many believed in the Lord throughout all Joppa."

In chapter x.—which we have already considered—

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the Gentiles are brought into the church. And now, Peter having finished his mission in these quarters, he returns to Jerusalem. After the account of his deliverance from the power of Herod in chapter xii., we have no continuous history of the apostle of the circumcision.

As HEROD AGRIPPA, the Idumean king, comes so prominently before us here, it may be well to notice the part he takes. He professed great zeal for the law of Moses, and maintained a certain respect towards its outward observance. He was therefore ready with a pretended pious zeal to side with the Jews against the disciples of Christ. This was his policy. He was a type of the adversary king.

It was about A.D. 44, that Herod sought to ingratiate himself with his Jewish subjects, by persecuting the unoffending Christians. Not that there was any love between Herod and the Jews, for they hated each other heartily; but here they united, as both hating the heavenly testimony. Herod killed James with the sword and cast Peter into prison. It was his wicked intention to keep him there till after the passover, and then, when a great many Jews from all parts would be in Jerusalem, to make a public spectacle of his execution. But God preserved and delivered His servant, in answer to the prayers of the saints. They have weapons of warfare which the governments of this world know nothing of. God allowed James to seal his testimony with his blood; but Peter He preserved for further testimony on the earth. Thus our God rules over all. He is the Governor among the nations, whatever the pride and will of man may be. Power belongeth unto Him.

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Feeble indeed is the power of every enemy when He interferes. Herod being baffled and confounded by the manifestation of a power which he could not understand, he condemns the keepers of the prison to death, and leaves Jerusalem. But he little thought that his own death was to precede that of his prisoner's.

At Cæsarea, the Gentile seat of his authority, he ordered a splendid festival in honour of the Emperor Claudius. Multitudes, we are informed, of the highest rank flocked from all quarters. On the second morning of the festivities the king appeared in a silver robe of great splendour, which glittered with the rays of the sun, so as to dazzle the eyes of the whole assembly, and excite general admiration. When making an oration to the people from his throne some of his flatterers raised a shout, "It is the voice of a god!" In place of repressing this impious adulation, which spread through the theatre, Herod accepted it. But a sense of God's judgment at that very moment seems to have pierced the heart of the king. In tones of deep melancholy, he said, "Your god will soon suffer the common lot of mortality." In the forcible language of scripture, it is said, "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." He was then seized with violent internal pains, and carried from the theatre to his palace. There he lingered five days, and died in the greatest agony, and in the most humiliating and loathsome state of body.

THE HERODIAN LINE OF KINGS.

As it may not be out of place here, or uninteresting to our readers, we would notice for a moment the HERODIAN

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line of kings. They frequently come before us, both in the life of our Lord, and in the early history of the church. We have associated in our minds, from early youth, the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem and Herod, king of Judea; though it is somewhat remarkable that Josephus, the principal historian of Herod, takes no notice of this event. It is generally thought, that the murder of a few children, in an obscure village, compared with Herod's other deeds of blood, was too unimportant in the eyes of Josephus to be recorded. But not so in the mind of God. Both the deceit and cruelty of the treacherous heart of the king are recorded in the sacred narrative. The eye of God watched over the "Child born" unto Israel—the only source of hope for all nations. The cruel design of Herod was thus defeated.

HEROD THE GREAT, the first Idumean king over Israel, received the kingdom from the senate of Rome through the influence of Mark Antony. This took place about thirty-five years before the birth of Christ, and about thirty-seven before his own death. These Idumeans were a branch of the ancient Edomites, who, while the Jews were in the Babylonish captivity, and their land lay desolate, took possession of as much of the southern part of it, as contained what had been the whole inheritance of the tribe of Simeon, and also half of that which had been the inheritance of the tribe of Judah; and there they dwelt ever after. In course of time, the Idumeans were conquered by John Hyrcanus, and brought over to Judaism. After their conversion, they received circumcision, submitted to the Jewish laws, and became incorporated with the Jewish nation. In this way they became

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Jews, though not of the ancient stock of Israel. This happened about one hundred and twenty-nine years before Christ. They were bold, crafty, and cruel as princes: they had great political foresight, courted the favour of Rome, and cared only for the establishment of their own dynasty. But, as God would have it, with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Idumean dynasty passed away, and even the very name of Herod seems to have perished from among the nations.

Besides the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem, which took place shortly before Herod's death, he had deeply imbrued his hands in the blood of his own family, and in the blood of many noble persons of the Asmonean line. His cruel jealousy towards that heroic family never slumbered. But one of his last acts was to sign the death warrant of his own son. When dying under the signal judgment of God, like his grandson, Herod Agrippa, he raised himself up in his bed, gave the mandate for the execution of Antipater, named Archelaus as his successor to the throne, fell back, and expired.

Thus, alas, have monarchs often died: dispensing death on the one hand, and kingdoms on the other. But, what then? In the naked reality of their own moral condition they must stand before the tribunal of God. The purple can no longer shield them. Inflexible righteousness rules on that throne. Judged according to the deeds done in the body, they must be banished beyond the "*gulf*" which God's judgment has "*fixed*" for ever. But, oh! there to remember, in torment, every moment of their past history—the privileges they have abused, the opportunities they have lost, and all the evil they have done. May the Lord save every soul that glances

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at these pages, from the awful weight of these words—*remember—tormented—fixed—*. They describe and characterize the future state of impenitent souls. Luke xvi.

The sect of the HERODIANS may have been the partisans of Herod, and chiefly political in their character; their main object being the maintenance of the national independence of the Jews, in the face of Roman power and ambition. They may have thought to use Herod for the accomplishing of this end. In the Gospel history they are represented as acting *craftily* towards the blessed Lord, and in concert with the Pharisees. Matthew xxii. 15, 16; Mark xii. 13, 14.

But we must now return to the history of our apostle.

In Acts xv., after an absence of about five years, Peter again appears; but during that time we know nothing of his abode or of his work. He takes an active part in the assembly at Jerusalem, and seems to have retained his original place among the apostles and elders.

PETER AT ANTIOCH.

Soon after this, as we learn from Galatians ii., he paid a visit to Antioch. But notwithstanding the decision of the apostles and church at Jerusalem, a characteristic weakness of Peter's betrays him into an act of dissimulation. It is one thing to settle a question in principle, it is quite another to carry it out in practice. Peter had actually stated in the assembly before them all, that the gospel which Paul had preached, by the revelation given to him, was no less a blessing to the Jew than to the Gentile. And while *alone* at Antioch, he acted on this principle, walking in the liberty of the heavenly truth

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and eating with the Gentiles. But when certain Jewish-minded Christians came down from James, he no longer dared to use this liberty—"He withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." "What a poor thing is man!" exclaims one. "And we are weak in proportion to our importance before men; when we are nothing, we can do all things, as far as human opinion is concerned. . . . Paul, energetic and faithful, through grace, alone remains upright; and he rebukes Peter before them all."

From this time, A.D. 49 or 50, his name does not again appear in the Acts of the Apostles; and we have no certain knowledge of the sphere of his labours. But, as he inscribes his first Epistle to the Hebrew Christians, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," he is supposed to have laboured in these countries. His second Epistle is of a much later date, and must have been written shortly before his death. This we learn from what he says in the first chapter: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." See John xxi. 18, 19.

The exact date of Peter's visit to Rome has been a subject of great controversy between catholic and protestant writers in all ages. But it may now be considered as a settled point, that he did not visit that city till near the end of his life. The date of his martyrdom is also uncertain. Most probably it took place about A.D. 67 or 68, and about the seventieth year of his age. The burning of Rome by Nero is dated by Tacitus, about the month of July, 64. The persecution against the

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Christians broke out soon after; and it was under this persecution that our apostle was honoured with the crown of martyrdom.

He was sentenced to be crucified, as the most severe and shameful death. But when he looked on the cross, he entreated the favour of the officers that he might not be crucified in the ordinary way, but that he might suffer with his head downwards: affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture as his blessed Lord and Master had done before him. His request being granted, he was crucified with his head downwards. Whether this be a fact or a mere legend, it well agrees with the fervent temperament and the deep humility of the great apostle.*

In following the catalogue already given, we next notice the apostle

ANDREW. The sacred historian has been very full and copious in describing the acts of Peter, but very sparing in his accounts of his brother Andrew. He was brought up with Peter to his father's trade, and continued at his occupation until he was called by the Lord to become a "fisher of men."

Andrew, like other young men of Galilee, had become a disciple of John the Baptist. But on hearing his master a second time speak of Jesus as the Lamb of God, He left John to follow Jesus. He was, immediately after this, the means of bringing his brother Peter to his new master. So far, he has the honour of being the first of the apostles who preached Christ. (John i.) He

* See Cave's *Lives of the Apostles;* Burton's *Ecclesiastical History;* Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible.*

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comes before us in the sixth and in the twelfth of John, and in the thirteenth of Mark; but beyond these few scattered notices, scripture relates nothing concerning him. His name does not appear in the Acts of the Apostles, except in the first chapter.

Conjecture and tradition have said many things about him, but it is only of fairly established facts that we would speak. He is said to have preached in Scythia, and to have travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, and to have suffered martyrdom at Patræ in Achaia. His cross, it is said, was formed of two pieces of wood crossing each other in the middle, in the form of the letter X, hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross. He died praying and exhorting the people to constancy and perseverance in the faith. The year in which he suffered is uncertain.

From the two brothers, Peter and Andrew, we now proceed to the two brothers, James and John. The four had also been partners in business. And first in order we notice

JAMES. Zebedee and his two sons, James and John, were following their usual occupation on the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus passed that way. Seeing the two brothers, "He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him." Peter and Andrew were also there. It was on this occasion that the Lord desired Peter to launch out into deeper water, and try another cast for fish. Peter inclines to reason: they had been very unsuccessful the previous night. Nevertheless, at the Lord's word, the net was let down. "And when they had thus done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and

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their net brake." Astonished and overwhelmed at this draught, Peter beckoned to his partners to come and help in landing the fish caught.

Full conviction was now wrought in the minds of those four young men, that Jesus was the true Messiah. They may have had doubts before, they have none now. At the call of Jesus they leave all, and become, once and for ever, His disciples. Henceforward, they were to become "fishers of men." In every list we have of the apostles, these four noble men are placed first; they stand at the head of the twelve throughout. Matthew iv. 17–20; Mark i. 16–20; Luke v. 1–11.

This is the call of James to the *discipleship*; about a year after this he is called to the *apostleship* with his eleven brethren. Matthew x.; Mark iii.; Luke vi.; Acts i.

Peter, James, and John, and occasionally Andrew, were always the most intimate companions of the blessed Lord. The *first three* only were admitted to the raising of Jairus' daughter. (Mark v.; Luke viii.) The same three apostles were alone permitted to be present at the transfiguration. (Matt. xvii.; Mark ix.; Luke ix.) It was the same three that witnessed His agony in Gethsemane. (Matt. xxvi.; Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.) But the four, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, are joined together when they ask the Lord privately about the destruction of the temple. Mark xiii.

Like the change in Peter's name, or the addition to it, the sons of Zebedee are surnamed *Boanerges*, or, "the sons of thunder." Great boldness and faithfulness may have singled out James to Herod, as the first to be seized and silenced. It is not a little remarkable that "the son of thunder" and the "rock-man" are the first to be apprehended. But James has the honour to be the first

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of the apostles that received the crown of martyrdom, A.D. 44. Peter was rescued by a miracle.

A mother's jealousy and her sons' ambition lead Salome to ask for very distinguished places in the kingdom for her two sons. The Lord allowed the petition to pass with a very mild reproof, but told the brothers that they should drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. James was early called upon to realize this prediction. After the ascension he is seen in company with the other apostles in Acts i. And then he disappears from the sacred narrative until his apprehension and death in Acts xii. And there we are simply told, in the brief language of the inspired historian that Herod the king killed James the brother of John with the sword.

Clement of Alexandria relates a tradition concerning James' martyrdom, which is not an unlikely thing to have occurred. As he was led forth to the place of execution, the soldier or officer that had guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, was so moved by the courage and bold confession of James at the time of his trial, that he repented of what he had done, and came and fell down at the apostle's feet, and begged forgiveness for what he had said against him. James, after a little surprise at the thing, raised him up, embraced and kissed him; and said, "Peace, my son, peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Whereupon, before all, he publicly professed himself to be a Christian, and so both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell James, the apostolic proto-martyr, cheerfully taking that cup which he had long since told his Lord that he was ready to drink of.*

* See Cave's *Life of St. James the Great.*

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JOHN—the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the younger brother of James. Though his father was a fisherman, it appears from the gospel narrative, that they were in good circumstances. Some of the ancients speak of the family as wealthy, and even as nobly connected. But these traditions are not reconcilable with the facts of scripture. We read, however, of their "hired servants," and they may have owned more vessels than one. And Salome, we doubt not, was one of those honoured women who ministered to the Lord of her substance. And John had a house of his own. (Luke viii. 3; John xix. 27.) We may safely infer from these facts, that their position was considerably above poverty. As many have gone to extremes in speaking of the apostles as *poor* and *illiterate*, we think it well to notice the few hints of scripture on these subjects.

Of the character of Zebedee, we know nothing. He made no objection to his sons leaving him at the call of the Messiah. But we hear no more of him afterwards. We frequently find the mother in company with her sons, but no mention of the father. The probability is that he died soon after the call of his sons.

The evangelist Mark, in enumerating the twelve apostles (chap. iii. 17), when he mentions James and John, says that our Lord "surnamed them Boanerges, which is, Sons of Thunder." What our Lord particularly intended to convey in this title, is not easily determined. Conjectures there have been many. Some suppose that it was because these two brothers were of a more furious and resolute disposition, and of a more fierce and fiery temper than the rest of the apostles. But we see no ground for such a conjecture in the gospel history. Doubtless, on one or two occasions their zeal

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was intemperate, but that was before they understood the spirit of their calling. More probably our Lord so surnamed them, as prophetic of their burning zeal in openly and boldly proclaiming the great truths of the gospel, after they became fully acquainted with them. Certain we are, that John in company with Peter, in the early chapters of the Acts, displayed a courage that feared no threatenings, and was daunted by no opposition.

John is supposed to have been the youngest of all the apostles; and, judging from his writings, he appears to have been possessed of a disposition singularly affectionate, mild, and amiable. He was characterized as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." On various occasions he was admitted to free and intimate intercourse with the Lord. John xiii.

"What distinguished John," says Neander, "was the union of the most opposite qualities, as we have often observed in great instruments of the advancement of the kingdom of God—the union of a disposition inclined to silent and deep meditation, with an ardent zeal, though not impelling to great and diversified activity in the outward world; not a passionate zeal, such as we suppose filled the breast of Paul before his conversion. But there was also a love, not soft and yielding, but one seizing with all its might, and firmly retaining the object to which it was directed—vigorously repelling whatever would disgrace this object, or attempt to wrest it from its possession; and this was his leading characteristic."

As the history of John is so intimately connected with the histories of Peter and James, which we have already gone over, we may now be very brief. These three names are seldom separated in the gospel history. But there is one scene in which John stands alone, and which

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ought to be noted. He was the only apostle who followed Jesus to the place of His crucifixion. And there he was specially honoured with the regard and confidence of his Master. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son; then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." John xix. 26, 27.

After the ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, John became one of the chief apostles of the circumcision. But his ministry goes down to the end of the first century. With his death the apostolic age naturally closes.

There is a widely spread and generally received tradition, that John remained in Judea till after the death of the virgin Mary. The date of this event is uncertain. But soon after he proceeded to Asia Minor. Here he planted and watched over several churches in different cities, but made Ephesus his centre. Thence he was banished to the Isle of Patmos, towards the close of Domitian's reign. There he wrote the Revelation. (Chap. i. 9.) On his liberation from exile, by the accession of Nerva to the imperial throne, John returned to Ephesus, where he wrote his Gospel and Epistles. He died about A.D. 100, in the third year of the emperor Trajan, and about one hundred years of age.*

From the many traditions about John himself, we select only one, which we think the most interesting, and the most likely to be true. As one who was unwearied in his love and care for the souls of men, he was

* See Horne's *Introduction to the New Testament.*

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deeply grieved by the apostasy of a young man in whom he had taken a special interest. When revisiting the place where he left him, he heard that he had joined a band of robbers and had become their captain. His love for him was so great that he determined to find him out. He hastened to the retreat of the robbers, suffered himself to be seized, and begged to be taken into their captain's presence. When he saw the venerable appearance of the aged apostle, his conscience was awakened. The recollection of earlier days was more than he could stand, and he fled in consternation from his presence. But John, full of paternal love, hastened after him. He entreated him to repent and return to the church, and encouraged him by the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins in the name of the Lord Jesus. His marvellous affection for the young man, and his deep concern for his soul, completely overcame him. He repented, returned, was restored, and afterwards became a worthy member of the christian community. May we seek to do likewise in restoring backsliders!

We now come to what we may call the second group of four apostles; and, just as Peter heads the first group, the second is headed by the apostle

PHILIP. In the first three Gospels he is placed in this order. He is mentioned as being of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. (John i. 44.) It is more than probable that he was among the Galileans of that district who flocked to hear the preaching of John the Baptist. Though no part of Palestine was spoken of in such terms of reproach as Galilee, it was from these despised, but simple, earnest, and devoted Galileans that our Lord chose His apostles. "Search and look," said the Pharisees,

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"for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." But sweeping statements, generally speaking, are untrue. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is a sample of their character.

Nothing is said in the gospel history of Philip's parents or occupation. Most likely he was a fisherman, the general trade of that place. From the similarity of language used by Philip and Andrew, and their being repeatedly mentioned together, we may conclude that our apostle, and the sons of Jonas and Zebedee, were intimate friends, and that they were all looking and waiting for the expected Messiah. But in the whole circle of our Lord's disciples Philip has the honour of being first called. The *first three* had come to Christ, and conversed with Him before Philip, but afterwards they returned to their occupation, and were not called to follow the Lord for about a year after. But Philip was called at once. "The day following," we read, "Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." These words, so full of meaning and rich blessing to the soul, "Follow me," we believe were first said to Philip. When the twelve were specially set apart for their office, he was numbered among them.

Immediately after his call, he finds Nathaniel and leads him to Jesus. It is evident, from the glad surprise which breathes in his information, that they had spoken together of these things before. His heart was now well assured of their truth; hence the joy expressed in these words, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." There is an evident earnest-heartedness about Philip, though little is said of him in the Gospels. Our last interview with him, like the first, is deeply interesting. Having

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heard the Lord repeatedly refer to His Father in John xii., xiii., xiv., he manifested a strong desire to know more of the Father. The pathetic words of our Lord about His Father appear to have made a deep impression on his heart; and little wonder. "Father, save me from this hour"—"Father, glorify thy name"—"In my Father's house are many mansions:" are sayings which, we doubt not, sank deep in all the disciples' hearts. But there is a beautiful simplicity about Philip, though lacking in intelligence. "Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." There is evident reproof, if not reproach, in the Lord's reply to Philip. "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." There had been the revelation of the Father in His own Person, and he ought to have known Him. He had now been a long time with His disciples, and they ought to have seen that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him, and thus have known where He was going, for He was going to the Father. They had both the "*words*" and the "*works*" of the Son, to convince them that the Father dwelt in Him. They had heard His words, they had seen His works, they had witnessed His character, and these things were fitted and intended to bring the Father before them. His own Person was the answer to every question. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He was the way—the only way to the Father. He was the truth—the truth as to every one and every thing as they are, is only known by Him. He is the life —"that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was

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manifested unto us." But it is only by the teaching and power of the Spirit that He who is "the way, the truth, and the life," is known and enjoyed. And there must be subjection of heart to Christ, if we would know the teaching of the Spirit.

After this deeply interesting and instructive conversation with the Lord, all is uncertain as to Philip's history —his name disappears from the Gospel narrative. He has his own place in the catalogue, Acts i. 13. Tradition has so frequently confounded Philip the evangelist with Philip the apostle, that all is uncertain. No doubt his remaining years were spent in devoted service to his Lord and Saviour, but where it is difficult to say. Some think that Upper Asia was the scene of his early labours, and that in the latter period of his life he came to Hierapolis in Phrygia, where he suffered a cruel martyrdom.

BARTHOLOMEW. It has been very generally believed both by ancients and moderns, that the history of Bartholomew lies concealed under another name. That he was one of the twelve apostles is perfectly clear from the gospel narrative, though nothing more is said of him than the bare mention of his name. In the first three Gospels Philip and Bartholomew are mentioned together; in John's Gospel, it is Philip and Nathanael. This circumstance has given rise to a very common conjecture, that these are but different names for the same person. Nothing was more common than this among the Jews. For example, Simon Peter is called "Bar-jona," which simply means—the son of Jona. "Bar-timeus" again, means the son of Timeus; and "Bartholomew" is a name of the same class. These are merely *relative*, not *proper* names. From this custom being so general among

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the Jews, it is often extremely difficult to *identify* persons in the gospel history.

Assuming, then, that Nathanael of John is the Bartholomew of the synoptical Gospels, we proceed with what we know of his history. Like the rest of the apostles, he was a Galilean—he was "of Cana in Galilee." We have seen in a former paper, that he was first conducted by Philip to Christ. On his approach, he was greeted by the Lord with the most honourable distinction—"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." He was, no doubt, a man of true simplicity and integrity of character; and one that "waited for redemption in Israel." Surprised at our Lord's most gracious salutation, and wondering how He could know him at first sight, "Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Solemn, yet blessed thought! he stood before One —a man—in this world, who knew the secrets of his heart and ways. Nathanael was now fully convinced of the absolute deity of the Messiah, and owns Him in His higher glories as "the Son of God" as well as "the king of Israel."

The character of Nathanael and his call are considered by many as typical of the remnant of Israel, without guile, in the latter day. The allusion to the fig-tree—the well-known symbol of Israel—confirms this view of the passage; and so does his beautiful testimony, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel." The spared remnant, seen and known by the Lord, will thus confess their faith in Him, as the prophets most fully shew. And all those who thus own the Messiah shall see His universal glory as the Son of man, according to Psalm viii. That

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coming day of widespread glory is anticipated by our Lord in His concluding remarks to Nathanael: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Then will the heavens and the earth be joined together, as if by Jacob's ladder. But we must now return to the direct history of our apostle.

The most distinct and conclusive passage as to his apostleship is John xxi. There we find him in company with the other apostles, to whom our Lord appeared at the Sea of Tiberias after His resurrection. "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and *Nathanael of Cana in Galilee*, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples," who probably were Andrew and Philip.

There is a generally received tradition, that Bartholomew travelled as far as India, preaching the gospel. Probably to that part of India which lies nearest to Asia. After travelling in different places, seeking to spread Christianity, he at last reached Albanople, in Armenia the Great, a place overgrown with idolatry. There he was arrested in the midst of his labours by the governor of the place, and condemned to be crucified. The date is not certainly known.

MATTHEW—called also Levi, the son of Alpheus; but not the same person, we believe, as Alpheus the father of James. (Matt. x. 3; Mark ii. 14; Luke v. 27–29.) Though a Roman officer, he was "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," and probably a Galilean, but of what city or tribe we are not informed. Before his call to follow the Messiah, he was a publican, or tax gatherer, under the Romans. He seems to have been stationed at Capernaum,

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a maritime town on the Sea of Galilee. He was what we should call a custom-house officer. It was in this capacity that Jesus found him. When He passed by, He saw him "sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him." But before proceeding with the history of Matthew, we would say a few words on the character of his occupation, as it is so frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and is really a symbolic term.

PUBLICANS, properly so called, were persons who farmed the Roman taxes or revenue. They were, usually, persons of wealth and credit. It was considered among the Romans an honourable position, and generally conferred on Roman knights. Sabinus, it is said, father of the Emperor Vespasian, was the publican of the Asiatic provinces. They employed under them inferior officers, and these, generally, were natives of the provinces where the taxes were collected; to this class Matthew no doubt belonged.

These petty officers were everywhere notorious for their fraudulent exactions; but to the Jews they were especially odious. They looked upon themselves as a freeborn people, and that they had this privilege direct from God Himself. "We be Abraham's seed," was their boast, "and were never in bondage to any man." Consequently, the Roman tax gatherers were the visible proofs of their slavery, and of the degraded state of their nation. This was the chain that galled them, and betrayed them into many acts of rebellion against the Romans. Hence it was that publicans were abhorred by the Jews. They looked upon them as traitors and apostates, and as the ready tools of the oppressor.

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Besides, they were most arbitrary and unjust in their taxations; and having the law on their side, they could enforce payment. It was in their power to examine each case of goods exported or imported, and to assess the alleged value in the most vexatious way. We may gather, from what John said to them, that they overcharged whenever they had an opportunity. "And he said unto them, Exact no more than is appointed you." (Luke iii. 13.) See also the case of Zaccheus. Luke xix. 9.

Surely these things were more than enough to bring the whole class into the greatest detestation everywhere. But we will confine ourselves to what we learn of them in the New Testament. The spirit of truth never exaggerates. There we find them classed with *sinners* (Matt. ix. 11; xi. 19); with *harlots* (Matt. xxi. 31, 32); with *heathen*. (Matt. xviii. 17.) As a class, they were excommunicated, not only from the privileges of the sanctuary, but from the privileges of civil society. And yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, their ranks furnished some of the earliest disciples both of John and of our Lord. They had less hypocrisy than those who were esteemed better, they had no conventional morality; and they had no false religion to unlearn. These things may be fairly argued from the parable of the Pharisee and publican. (Luke xviii.) Conventional goodness is a great hindrance to the soul's salvation. It is difficult for such to take the place of a lost, ruined sinner, that grace may have a free course and do her blessed, saving, gracious work. He who would be justified of God, must take the publican's place, and offer up the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." We now return to the history of our apostle.

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With great readiness Matthew obeyed the call of Jesus. His lucrative situation was at once given up; and his conversion, so thorough and manifest, was accompanied with much blessing to others. There was a great awakening and interest amongst his own class. "And Levi made a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of publicans and others that sat down with them." A feast is the symbol of joy and rejoicing—the immediate effect of a hearty surrender to Christ. It is worthy of note that in his own Gospel he refers to what he was, but neither of the other evangelists speaks of "Matthew the publican." Along with the others he was chosen one of the twelve. From that time he continued with the Lord, like the rest of the apostles. Blessed privilege!—"a familiar attendant on His person, a spectator of His public and private life, a hearer of His sayings and discourses, a beholder of His miracles, a witness of His resurrection and ascension to glory." Matthew was with the other apostles on the day of Pentecost, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. How long he continued in Judea after that event, we are not informed. His Gospel is supposed to be the first that was written, and has a special reference to Israel.

Ethiopia is generally assigned as the scene of his apostolic labours. There, some say, by preaching and miracles, he mightily triumphed over error and idolatry, was the means of the conversion of many, appointed spiritual guides and pastors to confirm and build them up, and to bring over others to the faith; and there finished his course. But the sources of information on these points cannot be trusted.

THOMAS.—The apostle Thomas was duly called by our

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Lord to the apostleship, and he is duly mentioned in the various apostolic lists. Of his birthplace or parents we are not informed in scripture; but tradition says he was born at Antioch. All that we know of him with certainty is related by John. But though our knowledge of Thomas be thus limited, there is no *character* among the apostles more distinctly marked than his. In fact, his name has become, both in the church and in the world, a synonym for doubting and unbelieving. It is said of a famous artist, when asked to produce a portrait of the apostle Thomas, that he placed a *rule* in his hand for the due measuring of evidence and argument. His mind was thoughtful, meditative, slow to believe. He looked at all the difficulties of a question, and inclined to take the dark side of things. But we will glance for a moment at the portrait which the pen of inspiration has drawn of him in the three following passages.

1. In John xi. his true character distinctly appears. He evidently viewed the proposed journey of our Lord into Judea with the darkest forebodings. "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go that we may die with him." In place of believing that Lazarus would be raised from the dead, he feared that both the Lord and His disciples would meet their own death in Judea. He could see nothing arising from such a journey but complete disaster. Nevertheless, he does not seek to hinder the Lord from going, like the other disciples. This too, is characteristic. He had deep affection for the Lord, and such was his devotedness that though the journey should cost all of them their lives, he was willing to go.

2. The second time referred to was the Last Supper.

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(John xiv.) Our Lord had been speaking of going away, and of the home he would prepare for them in heaven; and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, so that where He was they should be also. "And whither I go ye know," He added, "and the way ye know." But to our apostle's mind, these beautiful promises only awaken dark thoughts of the unseen, unknown future. "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Evidently he was eager to go, and earnest in his inquiries, but he wanted to be sure of the way before taking the first step. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." So long as the eye is fixed on Christ, we cannot make a false step. It is the single eye that receives the light of heaven, and sheds its radiance over the whole path.

3. The third time was after the resurrection. (John xx.) He was absent when the Lord appeared the first time to the disciples. When they told him that they had seen the Lord, he obstinately refused to believe what they said. From what he says, we may fairly gather, that he had seen the Lord on the cross, and that the overwhelming sight had produced a deep impression on his mind. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." The following Lord's day, when the disciples were assembled, Jesus appeared, and stood in the midst of them—His own place as the centre of the assembly. He again saluted them in the same words of peace—"Peace be unto you." But He at once turned to Thomas, as if he had been the main object of His

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appearing that day. "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." The effect on Thomas was immediate: all his doubts were removed, and in true orthodox faith he exclaimed "My Lord and my God." "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Some have thought that the faith of Thomas in this instance rises far above all the other disciples, and that nothing higher in testimony ever dropped from apostolic lips. This opinion, though a common one, cannot be founded on the general context. Christ, in reply to Thomas, pronounces those *more* blessed who saw not, and yet believed. It can scarcely be called even *christian* faith, as our Lord evidently hints. Christian faith is believing in Him whom we have not seen—walking by faith, not by sight.

Thomas, we have no doubt, represents the slow, unbelieving mind of the Jews in the last days, who will believe when they see. (Zech. xii.) He was not present at the first gathering of the saints after the resurrection. The reason why we are not told. But who can estimate the blessing that may be lost because of absence from the sanctioned meetings of the saints? He lost the blessed revelations of Christ as to relationship. "My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." His faith is not connected with the position of sonship. "He has not the communications of the efficacy of the Lord's work," as one has said, "and of the relationship with his Father into which Jesus brings His own, the church. He has peace, perhaps, but he has missed all

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the revelation of the church's position. How many souls—saved souls, even—are there in these two conditions."

The future apostolic labours of Thomas, and the end of his life, are so filled with traditions or legends, that we know nothing certainly. Some say he laboured in India and some in Persia. His martyrdom, it is said, was occasioned by a lance, and is still commemorated by the Latin church on December 21, by the Greek church on October 6, and by the Indians on July 1.

JAMES—the son of Alpheus. The identification of the Jameses, the Marys, and the Lord's brethren, has long been a difficult point with critics. This would not be the place even to refer to their theories and arguments. But after looking at different sides of the question, we still believe that our apostle is the James who was a principal man in the church at Jerusalem—who is the author of "The General Epistle of James"—who is also called the Lord's brother, and surnamed "the just," and "the less," probably because he was low in stature. Identification of persons is extremely difficult in such histories, from the habit, so common among the Jews, of calling near relations, brothers and sisters, and from nearly all of them having two or more names.

In the four lists of the apostles, James holds the same place. He heads the third class. They appear to be in fours. Peter heads the first, Philip the second, and James the third. Very little is known of James until after the resurrection. From what Paul says in 1 Corinthians xv. 7, it is evident that the Lord, before His ascension, honoured James with a personal interview. This was before the day of Pentecost, and may have

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been for the special encouragement, guidance, and strengthening of the apostle. We will now notice the principal passages, from which we gain our knowledge of James.

In the first chapter of the Acts, we find him with the others, waiting for the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost. After this we lose sight of him, until he is visited by Paul (Gal. i. 18, 19), which would be about the year A.D. 39. Now we find him equal with Peter as an apostle. He was at this time the overseer of the church at Jerusalem, and on a level with the very chiefest apostles. The place he held in Peter's estimation, appears from the fact, that when he was delivered from prison, he desires that information of his escape may be sent to "James and to the brethren." Acts xii. 17.

In A.D. 50, we find him in the apostolic council, where he seems to deliver the judgment of the assembly. "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God." (Acts xv.) None of the other apostles speak in this manner. It would appear that he had risen greatly in apostolic position and authority. About the year 51, when Paul paid another visit to Jerusalem, he recognizes James as one of the "pillars" of the church, and places his name before both Cephas and John. (Gal. ii. 9.) Again, about the year 58, Paul paid a special visit to James, in the presence of all the elders. "And the day following Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present." (Acts xxi. 18.) It is easily seen from these few notices, that James was held in the very highest esteem by the other apostles, and that he filled a most important position in the church at Jerusalem. His attachment to Judaism was deep and earnest, and his

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advancement in Christianity appears to have been slow and gradual. He was a perfect contrast to Paul; Peter forms a link between them.

The martyrdom of James is placed at about 62, close upon thirty years after Pentecost. The testimony of antiquity is universal, as to his distinguished piety and sanctity. His humility, too, appears great: though he was the Lord's brother, or near relation, he styles himself the servant of Jesus Christ, and does not so much as give himself the title of an apostle. For the reputation of his holy and righteous life, he was universally styled, "James the Just." And as he conformed to Jewish customs with a measure of regularity, he was by no means so offensive in the eyes of his unbelieving countrymen, as the apostle of the Gentiles. But notwithstanding the high opinion that was entertained of his character, his life was prematurely ended by martyrdom.

For an account of the life, character, and death of James, we are chiefly indebted to Hegesippus, a Christian of Jewish origin, who lived in the middle of the second century. He is generally received as a credible historian. His narrative of the martyrdom of James is given fully, and in his own words, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible." We can only give it in substance.

As many of the rulers and people of the Jews became believers in Jesus, through the labours of James, the scribes and pharisees were greatly stirred up against him. The whole of the people, they said, will believe in Christ. Therefore they came together to James, and said, "We pray thee, stop the people, for they have gone astray after Jesus as though he were the Christ. We pray thee to persuade all that come to the passover concerning

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Jesus. Persuade the people not to go astray about Jesus, for the whole people, and all of us, give heed unto thee. Stand, therefore, on a pinnacle of the temple that thou mayest be visible, and that thy words may be heard by all the people; for all the tribes and even the Gentiles are come together for the passover." But in place of saying what he was told, he proclaimed with a loud voice in the ears of all the people that Jesus was the true Messiah—that he firmly believed in Him, and that Jesus was now in heaven at God's right hand, and that He would come again in power and great glory. Many were convinced through the preaching of James and gave glory to God, crying, "Hosannah to the Son of David."

When the scribes and pharisees heard this, they said to each other, "We have done wrong in bringing forward such a witness to Jesus; let us go up and throw him down, that the people may be terrified and not believe in him." And they cried out, saying, Even James the Just has gone astray, and they threw him down. But as he was not killed with the fall they began to stone him. Then one of them who was a fuller, took the club with which he pressed the clothes, and brought it down on the head of James. Thus the apostle died, and, like the proto-martyr Stephen, he died praying for them in a kneeling posture. It was almost immediately after this that Vespasian commenced the siege of Jerusalem, and the Roman army turned the whole scene into desolation, blood, and ruin.

SIMON ZELOTES—also called "Simon the Canaanite." He seems to be a different person to Simon, the brother of James. We have no account of him in the gospel

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history. He is duly named in the Gospels and in the Acts, and then disappears from the sacred page.

It is generally supposed, that before his call to be an apostle, he belonged to a sect among the Jews called "The Zealots." They were conspicuous for their fierce advocacy of the Mosaic ritual. They looked upon themselves as the successors of Phinehas, who, in zeal for the honour of God, slew Zimri and Cozbi. (Num. xxv.) In pretending to follow the zeal of the priest of old, they assumed to themselves the right of putting to death a blasphemer, an adulterer, or any notorious offender, without the ordinary formalities of the law. They maintained that God had made an everlasting covenant with Phinehas, and with his seed after him, "because he was *zealous* for his God, and made atonement for Israel." These high sounding claims and pretensions deceived both rulers and people for a time. Besides, their fury and zeal for the law of Moses, and for the deliverance of the people from the Roman yoke, gave them favour in the eyes of all the nation. But, as must ever be the case under similar circumstances, their zeal soon degenerated into all manner of licentiousness and wild extravagance. They became the pests of every class of society.

Under a pretended zeal for the honour of God, they charged whom they would with being guilty of blasphemy, or of some other grievous sin, and immediately slew them and seized their property. Josephus tells us that they failed not to accuse some of the "prime nobility," and when they had succeeded in turning everything into confusion, they, meantime, "fished in the troubled waters." He bewails them as the great plagues of the nation. Attempts were made at different

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times to suppress the society, but it does not appear that they were ever much reduced until, with the unbelieving nation, they were swept away in the fatal siege.

Simon is frequently styled "Simon the Zealot," and is supposed to have belonged to this troublesome faction. There may have been true and sincere men among them, but good and bad alike passed under the odious name of "Zealots." Nothing is certainly known of the future labours of our apostle. Some say that, after travelling for a while in the East, he turned to the West, and penetrated as far as Britain, where he preached, wrought miracles, endured many trials, and at last suffered martyrdom.

JUDAS—the brother of James. This apostle is also called Jude, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. These different names have different shades of meaning, but the examination of such niceties comes not within the range of our "Short Papers." Judas was the son of Alpheus, and one of our Lord's kindred, as we read in Matthew xiii. 55, "Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?"

When, or how, he was called to the apostleship we are not informed; and there is scarcely any mention of him in the New Testament, except in the different catalogues of the twelve apostles. His name only occurs once in the gospel narrative, and that is when he asks the following question, "Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John xiv. 22.) It is quite evident from this question, that he was still entertaining, like his fellow-disciples, the idea of a temporal kingdom, or the manifestation of Christ's power on the earth, such

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as the world could perceive. But they understood not yet the dignity of their own Messiah. They were strangers to the greatness of His power, the glory of His Person, and the spirituality of His kingdom. His subjects are delivered, not only from this present evil world, but from the power of Satan, and from the realm of death and the grave. "Who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." (Col. i. 13.) The answer of Christ to the question of Judas is all-important. He speaks of the blessings of obedience. The truly obedient disciple shall surely know the sweetness of fellowship with the Father and the Son, in the light and power of the Holy Ghost. "It is not here a question of the love of God in sovereign grace to a sinner, but of the Father's dealings with His children. Therefore it is in the path of obedience that the manifestation of the Father's love and the love of Christ are found." Verse 23–26.

But we must bear in mind, when remarking on the questions or sayings of the apostles, that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The thoughts, feelings, and expectations of the apostles after that event, were altogether changed. Hence we find our apostle, like his brother James, styling himself, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." He neither calls himself an apostle, nor the Lord's brother. This was true humility, and founded on a true sense of the altered relations between them and the exalted Lord. On the day of Pentecost it was proclaimed, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

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Nothing is certainly known of the later history of our apostle. Some say that he first preached in Judea and Galilee, then through Samaria, into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia. But towards the end of his course, Persia was the field of his labours, and the scene of his martyrdom.

From 1 Corinthians ix. 5, it may be fairly inferred that he was one of the married apostles. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" There is a tradition about two of his grandsons, which is both interesting and apparently true. It has been handed down by Eusebius from Hegesippus, a converted Jew. Domitian, the Emperor, having heard that there were some of the line of David, and kindred of Christ, still alive, moved with jealousy, ordered them to be seized and brought to Rome. Two grandsons of Jude were brought before him. They frankly confessed that they were of the line of David, and kindred of Christ. He asked them about their possessions and estates. They told him they had but a few acres of land, out of the fruits of which they paid him tribute and maintained themselves. Their hands were examined, and were found rough and callous with labour. He then inquired of them concerning the kingdom of Christ, and when and where it would come. To this they replied, that it was a heavenly and spiritual, not a temporal kingdom; and that it would not be manifested till the end of the world. The Emperor, being satisfied that they were poor men and harmless, dismissed them unbound, and ceased from his general persecution of the church. When they returned to Palestine, they were received by the church with great affection, as being nearly allied to the

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Lord, and as having nobly confessed His name—His kingdom, power, and glory.

MATTHIAS—the apostle elected to fill the place of the traitor Judas. He was not an apostle of the first election—immediately called and chosen by the Lord Himself. It is more than probable that he was one of the seventy disciples, and had been a constant attendant upon the Lord Jesus, during the whole course of His ministry. This was a necessary qualification, as declared by Peter, of one who was to be a witness of the resurrection. So far as we know, the name of Matthias occurs in no other place in the New Testament.

According to some ancient traditions, he preached the gospel and suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia; others believe that it was rather in Cappadocia. Thus the great founders of the church were allowed to pass away from earth to heaven without a reliable pen to chronicle their labours—their last days—their last sayings, or even the resting place of the body. But all are chronicled in heaven, and will be held in everlasting remembrance. How marvellous are the ways of God, and how unlike they are to the ways of men!

The manner of this apostle's election was by lot—an ancient Jewish custom. The lots were put into the urn, Matthias' name was drawn out, and thereby he was the divinely chosen apostle. "And they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen. . . . . And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The solemn mode of casting lots

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was regarded as a way of referring the decision to God. "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat"—"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Lev. xvi. 8; Prov. xvi. 33.) The apostles, it will be remembered, had not yet received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The lot was never repeated after the day of Pentecost.

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CHAPTER V.

THE APOSTLE PAUL.

HAVING briefly sketched the lives of the *twelve* apostles, we naturally come to what may be called the *thirteenth*—the Apostle Paul.

In a former paper* we have spoken of the "conversion," and of the "apostleship" of Paul. We will now endeavour to trace his wonderful path, and note some of the prominent features of his labours. But first of all we would gather up what we know of him

BEFORE HIS CONVERSION.

It is very evident, from the few hints that we have in the sacred narrative of the early life of Paul, that he was formed in a remarkable manner by the whole course of his education, for what he was to become, and for what he was to accomplish. This was of God, who watched over the development of that wonderful mind and heart, from the earliest period. (Gal. i. 16.) Then he was known as "Saul of Tarsus"—Saul was his Jewish name—the name given him by his Jewish parents. Paul was his Gentile name; but we will speak of him as "Saul" until he is named "Paul" by the sacred historian.

TARSUS was the capital of Cilicia, and, as Paul says,

* See pages 67, 70,

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"no mean city." It was renowned as a place of commerce, and as a seat of literature. The tutors of both Augustus and Tiberius were men of Tarsus. But it will be chiefly famous to all time as the birthplace and early residence of the great apostle.

But, though born in a Gentile city, he was "an Hebrew of the Hebrews." His father was of the tribe of Benjamin, and of the sect of the Pharisees, but settled at Tarsus. By some means he had acquired the Roman franchise, as his son could say to the chief captain, "But I was free born." At Tarsus he learned the trade of tent making. It was a wholesome custom among the Jews, to teach their sons some trade though there might be little prospect of their depending upon it for their living.

When Paul made his defence before his countrymen, (Acts xxii.) he tells them that, though born in Tarsus, he had been brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." History speaks of Gamaliel as one of the most eminent of the doctors of the law; and from the scriptures we learn that he was moderate in his opinions, and possessed of much worldly wisdom. But the persecuting zeal of the pupil soon appears in strong contrast with the master's counsels for toleration.

At the time of Stephen's martyrdom, Saul is spoken of as yet a young man, but as consenting to Stephen's death, and as keeping the clothes of them that stoned him. His conversion is supposed to have taken place about two years after the crucifixion; but the *exact* date is unknown.

From Acts ix. we learn, that he made no delay, after his conversion, in confessing his faith in Christ to those

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that were around him. "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus: and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue that he is *the Son of God.*" This new testimony is specially worthy of notice. Peter had proclaimed Him as the exalted Lord and Christ: Paul proclaims Him in His higher and personal glory, as *the Son of God.* But the time for his public ministry had not yet come; he had many things to learn, and, led of the Spirit, he retires into Arabia; remains there for three years, and returns to Damascus. Galatians i. 17.

Strengthened and confirmed in the faith during his retirement, he preaches with increased boldness, proving that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The Jews, his unrelenting enemies, henceforward, are stirred up against him. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. (2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.) He then found his way to Jerusalem; and through the friendly testimony of Barnabas, he found his place among the disciples. Wonderful, blessed triumph of sovereign grace!

SAUL'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM.
ABOUT A.D. 39.

The apostle is now at Jerusalem—the holy city of his fathers—the metropolis of the Jews' religion, and the acknowledged centre of Christianity. But how changed his own position since he started on his memorable journey to Damascus!

We may here pause for a moment, and notice in passing the hoary city of Damascus. It is intimately connected with the conversion, ministry, and history

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of our apostle. Besides, it is conspicuous all through scripture.

DAMASCUS is supposed to be the oldest city in the world. According to Josephus (Ant. i. 6. 4) it was founded by *Uz*, the son of Aram, and grandson of Shem. It is first mentioned in scripture in connection with Abraham, whose steward was a native of the place: "The steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus." (Gen. xv. 2.) It is thus a connecting link between the patriarchal age and modern times. Its beauty and richness have been proverbial for full four thousand years. The kings of Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, have conquered it, and it has prospered under every dynasty, and outlived them all; but it owes its chief lustre and its everlasting memorial to the name of the Apostle Paul.*

We now return to Jerusalem. After spending fifteen days with Peter and James, and reasoning with the Grecians, the brethren "brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts ix. 26, 31.) For the moment the adversary is silenced. Peace reigns, through the goodness of God. Persecution has accomplished the purposes of His grace. The two great elements of blessing—the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, prevail in all the assemblies. Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in

* See Porter's *Five Years in Damascus*, for the latest and best account of the city and its environs.

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the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they are edified, and their numbers greatly increase.

While Saul was at Tarsus, his native place, the good work of the Lord was making great progress at Antioch. Among those that were scattered abroad through the persecution which arose about Stephen, there were "men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." (Acts xi. 19–21.) A new order of things commences here. Up to this time, the gospel had been preached to "none but unto the Jews only." When the report of this blessed work of God among the Gentiles reached Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent by the church on a special mission to Antioch. "When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord."

As the work increased, Barnabas, no doubt, feeling the need of help, thought of Saul; and, led of the Lord, he departed at once in search of him. Having found him, he brought him to Antioch; and there they laboured together for a "whole year," both in the assemblies of believers, and among the people. Barnabas still takes the lead. Hence we read of "Barnabas and Saul." Afterwards the order changes, and we read of "Paul and Barnabas."

An opportunity soon occurred for the young converts at Antioch to shew their affection for their brethren at Jerusalem. A prophet, "named Agabus, signified by

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the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt at Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

SAUL'S SECOND VISIT TO JERUSALEM. ABOUT A.D. 44.

Charged with this service Barnabas and Saul go up to Jerusalem. As yet, Jerusalem is owned as the centre of the work, though now rapidly extending to the Gentiles. But union is preserved, and the link with the metropolis is strengthened by means of the collection now sent. Nevertheless, a new centre, a new commission, a new character of power, in connection with the history of the church, now come before us. Barnabas and Saul having fulfilled their ministry, they return again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts xiii. opens up before us an entirely new order of things in connection with apostolic work, and we shall do well to mark the mighty change. The great fact here to be noted is, the place that the Holy Ghost takes in calling out and sending forth Barnabas and Saul. It is no longer Christ upon earth by His personal authority sending forth apostles; but, *the Holy Ghost*. "Separate unto me," He says, "Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them . . . . so they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Not, of course, that there could be any change as to the authority or

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power of either the Lord or the Spirit, but their mode of action was now changed. The Holy Ghost on earth, in connection with a glorified Christ in heaven, now becomes the source and power of the work that opens before us, and which is committed to Barnabas and Saul. Hence we now come to

SAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. ABOUT A.D. 48.

And here, further remark, before setting out with the apostles on their journey, how changed everything is. They start, observe, not from the old centre, Jerusalem, but from Antioch, a city of the Gentiles. This is significant. Jerusalem and the twelve have lost position, as to outward authority and power. The Holy Ghost calls Barnabas and Saul to the work, fits them for it, and sends them forth, without the jurisdiction of the twelve.

It will not be expected, that in papers of such a brief character, we can notice the many incidents in Paul's journeys. The reader will find them in the Acts and in the Epistles. We propose merely to trace their outline; and to give prominence to certain landmarks, by which the reader will be able to trace for himself the various journeyings of the greatest apostle—the greatest missionary—the greatest labourer that ever lived—the blessed Lord excepted. But in the first place, we would notice his companions and their starting point.

BARNABAS has been for some time the close companion of Saul. He was a Levite of the island of Cyprus. He had been early called to follow Christ, and "having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the

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apostles' feet." Comparing his liberality with the fine testimony which the Holy Ghost renders to him, he stands before us as a lovely—an exquisite character. And, from his early attachment to Saul, and from his heartiness in introducing him to the other apostles, we judge that he was more frank and larger-hearted, than those who had been trained in the narrowness of Judaism; but, he lacked in service the thoroughness and determination of his companion Saul.

JOHN MARK was nearly related to Barnabas—"his sister's son." (Col. iv. 10.) His mother was a certain Mary who dwelt at Jerusalem, and whose house seems to have been a meeting place for the apostles and first Christians. When Peter was delivered from prison, he went straight to "the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark." (Acts xii.) It is supposed that on this occasion he was converted through Peter's means, as he afterwards speaks of him as "Marcus my son." 1 Peter v. 13.

From these notices we learn, that he was neither an apostle nor one of the seventy—that he had not companied with the blessed Lord during His public ministry. But we may suppose he was anxious to work for Christ, and so joined Barnabas and Saul; though it afterwards appeared that his faith was not equal to the hardships of a missionary life. "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem." (Acts xiii. 13.) Mark is supposed to have written his Gospel about A.D. 63.

ANTIOCH, the ancient capital of the Seleucidæ, was

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founded by Seleucus Nicator, about B.C. 300. Antioch was only second to Jerusalem in the early history of the church. What Jerusalem had hitherto been to the Jews, Antioch now became to the Gentiles. It was a central point. From this time it occupied a most important place in the propagation of Christianity among the heathen. Here the first Gentile church was planted. (Acts xi. 20, 21.) Here the disciples of Christ were first called Christians. (Chap. xi. 26.) And here our apostle commenced his public ministerial work.

We now return to the mission.

Barnabas and Saul, with John Mark as their ministering servant, are thus sent forth by the Holy Ghost. The Jews in virtue of their connection with the promises, have the gospel first preached to them; but the conversion of Sergius Paulus marks, in a special manner, the beginning of the work amongst the Gentiles. It also marks a *crisis* in the history of the apostle. Here his name is changed from *Saul* to *Paul*; and now it is no longer "Barnabas and Saul;" but "Paul and his company." He takes the lead; the others are only those who are with Paul. But the scene has also a typical character.

The Pro-consul was evidently a thoughtful, prudent, man, and felt the need of his soul. He sends for Barnabas and Saul, and desires to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer withstands them. He knew well, that if the governor received the truth that Paul preached, he would lose his influence at court. He therefore seeks to turn away the deputy from the faith. But Paul, in the conscious dignity and power of the Holy Ghost, "set his eyes on him," and, in words of

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the most withering indignation, rebuked him in the presence of the governor. "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season . . . . then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." The mighty power of God accompanies the word of His servant, and the sentence pronounced is executed at the moment. The deputy is overwhelmed with the moral glory of the scene, and submits to the gospel.

"I do not doubt," says one, "that in this wretched Bar-jesus we see a picture of the Jews at the present time, smitten with blindness for a season, because jealous of the influence of the gospel. In order to fill up the measure of their iniquity, they withstood its being preached to the Gentiles. Their condition is judged—opposed to grace and seeking to destroy its effect upon the Gentiles—they have been smitten with blindness; nevertheless, only for a season."*

During this first mission among the Gentiles, a great and blessed work was done. Compare Acts xiii., xiv. Many places were visited, churches were planted, elders were appointed, the hostility of the Jews manifested, and the energy of the Holy Ghost displayed in the power and progress of the truth. At Lystra, Christianity was confronted, for the first time, with paganism; but in every place the gospel triumphs, and the various gifts of Paul as a workman, most blessedly appear. Whether

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. iv. page 45.

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in addressing the Jews who knew the scriptures, or ignorant barbarians, or cultivated Greeks, or enraged mobs, he proves himself to be a chosen vessel divinely fitted for his great work.

ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA deserves a special notice from what took place in the synagogue. Though there is a strong resemblance in Paul's discourse to those of Peter and of Stephen in the earlier chapters of the Acts, yet we discover certain touches strictly Pauline in their character. His conciliatory style of address—the way he introduces Christ, and his bold proclamation of justification by faith alone, may be considered as typical of his after addresses and Epistles. None of the sacred writers speak of justification by faith as Paul does. His closing appeal has been a favourite gospel text with all preachers in all ages. In a few words he states the blessedness of all who receive Christ, and the awful doom of those who reject Him; thereby proving that there can be no middle, or neutral ground, when Christ is in question. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no-wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 38–41.

Their mission being fulfilled, they return to Antioch in Syria. When the disciples heard what the Lord had done, and that the door of faith was opened to the Gen-

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tiles, they could only praise and bless His holy name. We must now turn for a moment to Jerusalem.

The effect of Paul's first mission on the disciples at Jerusalem led to a great *crisis* in the history of the church. The jealousy of the pharisaic mind was so aroused, that a division between Jerusalem and Antioch was threatened at that early period of the church's history. But God ruled in grace, and the matter as to Antioch was happily settled. But the bigotry of the believing Jews was unquenchable. In the church at Jerusalem, they still connected with Christianity the requirements of the law, and these requirements they sought to impose on the believing Gentiles.

Some of the more strictly Jewish-minded Christians came down to Antioch, and assured the Gentiles, that unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and kept the law, they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them; but as it was too weighty a question to be settled by the apostolic authority of Paul, or by a resolution of the church at Antioch, it was agreed that a deputation should go up to Jerusalem, and lay the matter before the apostles and elders there. The choice naturally fell on Paul and Barnabas, as they had been the most active in the propagation of Christianity among the Gentiles.

And now we come to

PAUL'S THIRD VISIT TO JERUSALEM. ABOUT A.D. 50.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, they found the same thing, not only in the minds of a few restless brethren, but in the very bosom of the church. The source of the trouble was there; not among unbelieving Jews, but

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among those who professed the name of Jesus. "Then rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses." This plain statement brought the whole question fairly before the assembly, and their important deliberations commenced. Chapter xv. contains the account of what took place, and how the question was settled. The apostles, elders, and the whole body of the church at Jerusalem were not only present with one accord, but took part in the discussion. The apostles neither assumed nor exercised exclusive power in the matter. It is usually called "The first council of the church;" but it may also be called the last council of the church which could say, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

Many, according to modern notions of "essentials, and non-essentials," will no doubt say, that the mere ceremony of circumcising or not circumcising a child was very unimportant. But not so, according to the mind of God. It was a *vital* question. It affected the very foundations of Christianity, the deep principles of grace, and the whole question of man's relations with God. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians is a commentary on the history of this question.

There was no rite or ceremony that the converted Jew was so unwilling to give up as circumcision. It was the sign and seal of his own relationship with Jehovah, and of the hereditary blessings of the covenant to his children. It has been the opinion of some in all ages, that "infant baptism" was introduced by the church to meet this strong Jewish prejudice. But had it been so intended by the Lord, the council at Jerusalem was the very place

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to announce it. It would have fully met the difficulty, and settled the question before them, and restored peace and unity between the two parent churches. But none of the apostles or others allude to it.

Before leaving this important and suggestive part of our apostle's history, it may be well just to notice certain facts which he brings out in Galatians ii., but which are not mentioned in the Acts. It was on this occasion that Paul went up by revelation, and took Titus with him. In the Acts we have the outward history of Paul yielding to the motives, desires, and objects of men; in the Epistle, we have something deeper—that which governed the apostle's heart. But God knows how to combine these outward circumstances, and the inward guidance of the Spirit. Christian liberty or legal bondage were the questions at issue: whether the law of Moses—in particular the rite of circumcision—ought to be imposed upon the Gentile converts. Paul, led of God, goes up to Jerusalem, and takes Titus with him. In the face of the twelve apostles, and of the whole church, he brings in Titus, who was a Greek, and who had not been circumcised. This was a bold step—to introduce a Gentile, and uncircumcised, into the very centre of a bigoted Judaism! But the apostle went up by revelation. He had positive communications with God on the subject. It was the divine way of deciding the question, once and for ever, between Himself and the Judaizing Christians. This step was needful, as he says, "Because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."

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The apostle, then, having attained his main object, and having communicated his gospel to them at Jerusalem, leaves, with Barnabas, and returns to the Gentile Christians at Antioch. The two delegates, Judas and Silas, bearing the decrees of the council, accompany them. When the multitude of the disciples came together and heard the Epistle read, they rejoiced and were comforted.

Thus closed the first apostolic council, and the first apostolic controversy. And, from what we learn of these matters in the Acts, we might conclude that the division between the Jewish and Gentile Christians had been completely healed by the decision of the assembly; but we know from the Epistles, that the opposition of the Judaizing party against the liberty of Gentile Christians, never even slumbered. It soon broke out afresh, and Paul had constantly to meet it, and to contend against it.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY.
ABOUT A.D. 51.

After Paul and Barnabas had spent some time with the Church at Antioch, another missionary journey was proposed. "Let us go again," said Paul, "and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of

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God. And he went through Syria, and Cilicia, confirming the churches." Chapter xv. 36–41.

With a journey so important, so full of trials, and so requiring courage and steadfastness—before the mind of our apostle—he could not trust Mark as a companion; he could not easily excuse one whose home attachments rendered him unfaithful in the Lord's service. Paul himself gave up all personal considerations and feelings when the work of Christ was concerned, and he wished others to do the same. Natural affection on this occasion may have betrayed Barnabas, in again pressing his nephew into the service; but a severe earnestness characterized Paul. The ties of natural relationship and human attachments had still great influence over the mild christian character of Barnabas. This is evident from his conduct at Antioch on the occasion of Peter's weak compliance with the Judaizers from Jerusalem. (Gal. ii.) The spread of the gospel in a hostile world was too sacred in Paul's eyes to admit of experiments. Mark had preferred Jerusalem to the work, but Silas preferred the work to Jerusalem. This decided Paul as to his choice; though, no doubt, he was guided by the Spirit.

Barnabas takes Mark his *kinsman*, and sails to Cyprus his *native country*. And here we part with Barnabas, that beloved saint, and precious servant of Christ! His name is not again mentioned in the Acts. These words "kinsmen" and "native country" must be left to speak for themselves to the heart of every disciple who reads these pages. Were we *meditating* on this painful scene, in place of giving a mere outline of a great history, we might say much on the subject; but we leave it with two happy reflections. 1. That it was overruled for

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blessing to the heathen; the waters of life now flow in two streams in place of one. This, however, is God's goodness, and gives no sanction to the divisions of Christians. 2. That Paul afterwards speaks of Barnabas with entire affection; and desires that Mark should come to him, having found him profitable for the ministry. (2 Cor. ix. 6; 2 Tim. iv. 11.) We have no doubt that Paul's faithfulness was made a blessing to them both. But the honey of human affections can never be accepted on the altar of God.

Having been recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God, they start on their journey. All is beautifully simple. No parade is made by their friends in seeing them off, and no great promises are made by them, as to what they were determined to do. "Let us go again and visit our brethren," are the few, simple, unpretending words, which lead to Paul's second and great missionary journey. But the Master was thinking of His servants and providing for them. They had not to go far before finding a new companion in Timotheus, of Lystra; and one who was to supply the void caused by the difference with Barnabas. If Paul lost the fellowship of Barnabas as a friend and brother, he found in Timothy, as his own son in the faith, a sympathy and a fellowship which only closed with the apostle's life. "Him would Paul have to go forth with him," but before they go, Paul "circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters; for they knew all that his father was a Greek." Paul, on this occasion, stoops to the prejudice of the Jews, and circumcises Timothy to set it aside.

TIMOTHEUS, or Timothy, was the son of one of those

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mixed marriages, which have ever been strongly condemned, both in the Old and in the New Testament. His father was a Gentile, but his name is never mentioned; his mother was a pious Jewess. From the absence of any reference to the father, either in the Acts or in the Epistles, it has been supposed that he may have died soon after the child was born. Timothy was evidently left in infancy to the sole care of his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, who taught him from a child to know the holy scriptures. And from the many allusions in Paul's Epistles to the tenderness, the sensitiveness, and the tears of his beloved son in the faith, we may believe that he retained through life the early impressions of that gentle, loving, holy, household. Paul's wonderful love for Timothy, and his tender recollections of his home at Lystra, and his early training there, have dictated some of the most touching passages in the writings of the great apostle. When an old man —in prison, in want, and martyrdom before him—he writes, "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day: greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice: and I am persuaded that in thee also." (2 Tim. i. 2–5.) He urges, and repeats his urgent invitation to Timothy to come and see him. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me—to come before winter." We may be permitted to believe, that a son so tenderly loved, was

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allowed to arrive in time to soothe the last hours of his father in Christ, to receive his last counsel and blessing, and to witness him finish his course with joy.

SILAS, or Silvanus, first comes before us as a teacher in the church at Jerusalem; and, probably, he was both a Hellenist and a Roman citizen like Paul himself. (Acts xvi. 3.) He was appointed as a delegate to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch with the decrees of the council. But as many details both in the life of Timothy and of Silas will naturally come before us in tracing the path of the apostle, we need say nothing more of either at present. We will now proceed with the journey.

Paul and Silas, with their new companion, go through the cities, enjoining them to keep the decrees ordained by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. The decrees were left with the churches, so that the Jews had the decision of Jerusalem itself, that the law was not binding on the Gentiles. After visiting and confirming the churches already planted in Syria and Cilicia, they proceeded to Phrygia and Galatia. They travelled "throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia." Here we pause for a moment and wonder as we transcribe such words as these, "throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia." Phrygia and Galatia were not towns merely, but provinces, or large districts of country. And yet the sacred historian only uses these few words in recording the great work done there. How different is the condensed energy of the Spirit, to the inflated style of man! We learn from Neander's history, that in Phrygia alone, in the sixth century,

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there were sixty-two towns. And it would appear that Paul and those who were with him had gone through them all.

The same remarks as to labour would apply to Galatia. And we learn from Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, that at this very time he was suffering in body. "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first." But the power of his preaching so strikingly contrasted with the infirmity of his flesh, that the Galatians were moved even to extravagance in sympathy and generous feeling. "And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an *angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me." (Chap. iv. 13–15.) We learn from history that the Galatians were Celtic in their origin, impulsive and changeable in their character.* The whole Epistle is a sorrowful illustration of their instability, and of the sad effects of the Judaizing element amongst them. "I marvel," says Paul, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." But to return to the history in the Acts.

The character and effects of Paul's ministry, as related in chapters xvi.–xx., are truly marvellous. They must ever stand alone on the page of all history. Every servant of Christ, and especially the preacher, should study them most carefully and read them frequently. "The

* See Smith's *Student's New Testament History.*

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vessel of the Spirit," as one has beautifully said, "shines with a heavenly light throughout the whole work of the gospel; he condescends at Jerusalem; thunders in Galatia when souls are being perverted; leads the disciples to decide for the liberty of the Gentiles, and uses all liberty himself to be as a Jew to the Jews, and as without law to those who had no law; but always subject to Christ. He was also 'void of offence.' Nothing within hindered his communion with God: whence he drew his strength to be faithful among men. He could say—and none but he—'Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ.' Thus also he could say, 'I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.'"*

The way of the Spirit with the apostle in these chapters is also remarkable. He alone directs him in his wonderful course, and sustains him amidst many trials and opposing circumstances. For example, He forbids Paul to preach the word in Asia—He will not suffer him to go into Bithynia, but directs him, by a vision of the night, to go into Macedonia. "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis. And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony." Chapter xvi. 9–12.

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. iv.

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PAUL CARRIES THE GOSPEL INTO EUROPE.

This marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church—the history of Paul, and the progress of Christianity. Paul and his companions now carry the gospel into Europe. And here we might be forgiven were we to rest for a moment, and recall the many interesting historical associations of Macedonian conquerors and conquests; and to dwell a little on the plain of Philippi, famous also in Roman history. Here the great struggle between the republic and the empire was terminated. To commemorate that event, Augustus founded a colony at Philippi. This was the first city at which Paul arrived on his entrance into Europe. It is called "the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony." A Roman colony, we are told, was *characteristically* a miniature resemblance of Rome; and Philippi was more fit than any other in the empire to be considered the representative of Imperial Rome.

To many of our young and inquiring readers, this short digression, we feel sure, will not be uninteresting. Besides, a knowledge of such histories is useful to the student of prophecy, as they are the fulfilment of Daniel's visions, especially of chapter vii. The city of Philippi was itself the monument of the rising power of Greece, that was to crush the declining power of Persia. Alexander the Great, son of Philip, was the conqueror of the great king Darius; or, the "Leopard" of Greece overcame the "Bear" of Persia.*

In looking back from the time that Paul sailed from Asia to Europe, nearly four hundred years had passed

* See *Notes on the Book of Daniel*, by W. K.

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away since Alexander sailed from Europe to Asia. But how different their motives and their objects—their conflicts and their victories! The enthusiasm of Alexander was aroused by the recollection of his great ancestors, and by his determination to overthrow the great dynasties of the East, but, though unconsciously and unintentionally, he was accomplishing the purposes of God. Paul had girded on his armour for another purpose, and to win greater and more enduring victories. He was sent forth by the Holy Spirit, not only to subdue the West, but to bring the whole world into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Christianity is not for one nation, or one people only, but for man universally; or, as Paul himself expresses it in Colossians i., "For every creature which is under heaven." This is the mission of the gospel, and this is its sphere.

But there is another thing we must notice here before proceeding with Paul's journey.

LUKE, the "beloved physician," historian, and evangelist, appears to have joined Paul at this particular time. From verse 10 he writes in the first person plural: "*We* endeavoured to go into Macedonia." It is supposed that he was a Gentile by birth and converted at Antioch. He seems to have remained the faithful companion of the apostle, till the close of his labours and his afflictions. 2 Timothy iv. 11.

THE EFFECT OF PAUL'S PREACHING AT PHILIPPI.

The number of Jews at Philippi appears to have been small, as there was no synagogue in the place. But the apostle, as usual, goes first to them, even when it is only a few women come together by the river side. (Acts xvi.)

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Paul preached to them, Lydia is converted, the door is opened, and others also believe. It was in this unpretending place, and to these few pious women, that the gospel was first preached in Europe, and the first household baptized.* But its quiet beginnings, and its peaceful triumphs, were soon to be disturbed by the malice of Satan and the covetousness of man. The gospel was not to be advanced in the midst of heathenism with ease and comfort, but with great opposition and suffering.

As the apostle and his companions were going to the oratory, or place of prayer, a damsel possessed of an evil spirit followed them, and cried, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." At first, Paul took no notice of her. He went on with his own blessed work of preaching Christ, and winning souls for Him. But the poor possessed slave persisted in following them, and in uttering the same exclamation. It was a malicious attempt of the enemy to hinder the work of God, by bearing a testimony to the ministers of the word. It will be observed that she does not bear testimony to "Jesus," or to the "Lord," but to His "servants," and to "the most high God." But Paul did not want a

* The action of the Spirit as to the *family* seems to have obtained remarkably among the Gentiles; among the Jews, as far as I know, we do not hear of it. We have found, already, districts among the Jews, as also among the Samaritans, which were powerfully impressed (to say the least) by the gospel: but among the Gentiles, families seem particularly visited by divine grace, as recorded by the Spirit. Take for example Cornelius, the jailor, Stephanus; indeed you find it over and over again. This is exceedingly encouraging—especially to us.—*Introductory Lectures to the Acts of the Apostles*, &c., by W. K.

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testimony to himself, nor a testimony from an evil spirit, and he, "being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

As the damsel could no longer practise her arts of soothsaying, her masters saw themselves deprived of the gains which they had hitherto derived from that source. Enraged at the loss of their property, and moving the multitude to side with them, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the magistrates. As they were well aware that they had no real charge to bring against them, they raised the old cry of "troubling the peace" —that they were attempting to introduce Jewish practices into the Roman colony, and to teach customs which were contrary to the Roman laws. And, as it has often been since, the clamour of the multitude was accepted in the place of evidence, examination, and deliberation. The magistrates, without further inquiry, commanded them to be publicly scourged and cast into prison. And thus it was; these blessed servants of God, wounded, bleeding, and faint, were handed over to a cruel jailor to keep them safely, and he added to their sufferings by making their feet fast in the stocks. But in place of Paul and Silas being depressed by their bodily sufferings and the gloomy walls of a prison, they *rejoiced* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and pain for the sake of Christ —and in place of the silence of midnight being broken with the sighs and groans of the prisoners, they "prayed and sang praises to God: and the other prisoners heard them."

If Satan is not without resources to carry on his evil work, God is not without resources to carry on His good work. He now makes use of all that has happened to

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direct the progress of the work of the gospel, and to accomplish the purposes of His love. The jailor is to be converted, the church is to be gathered out, and a witness set up for the Lord Jesus Christ, in the very stronghold of heathenism. At midnight, while Paul and Silas were singing, and the prisoners listening to the unusual sound, there was a great earthquake. God enters the scene in majesty and grace. He utters His voice, and the earth trembles: the prison walls are shaken; the doors fly open, and every man's fetters fall off. And now, what are Roman prisons?—what are Roman legions?—what is the whole power of the enemy? God's voice is heard in the storm: but the violence of the tempest is succeeded by the still small voice of the gospel and the peace of heaven.

Awakened in a moment by the earthquake, the jailor's first thoughts were of his prisoners. Alarmed at seeing the prison doors open, and supposing that the prisoners were fled, he drew his sword and would have killed himself. "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." These words of love broke the jailor's heart. The calm serenity of Paul and Silas—their refusing to avail themselves of the opportunity to escape—their tender concern for him—all combined to make them appear in the eyes of the astonished jailor, as beings of a higher order. He laid aside his sword, called for a light, sprang into the prison; and, trembling, fell down at the apostle's feet. His conscience was now reached, his heart was broken, and there was something like the violence of an earthquake agitating his whole soul. He takes the place of a lost sinner, and cries, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He does not say, like the lawyer in Luke x., "Master, what

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shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It was no question with the jailor of *doing* something for *life*, but of salvation for the lost. The lawyer, like many others, did not know himself as a lost sinner, therefore he does not speak about salvation.

In reply to the most important inquiry that human lips can ever make, "What must I do to be saved?" the apostle directs the mind of the jailor to Christ—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." God gave the blessing, and the whole house believed, rejoiced, and were baptized. And now all is changed; the jailor takes the prisoners into his own house—his cruelty is changed into love, sympathy, and hospitality. In the same hour of the night he washed their stripes—set meat before them—rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. What an eventful night! What a change in a few hours! and what a joyful morning dawned on that happy house! The Lord be praised!

Like Darius of old, the magistrates appear to have been disturbed during the night. The news of the earthquake might have reached them, or that Paul and Silas were Romans. But as soon as it was day, they sent word to the jailor to "let those men go." He immediately made known the order to Paul and Silas, and wished them to depart in peace. But Paul refused to accept his liberty without some public acknowledgment of the wrong he had suffered. He also now made known the fact that he and Silas were Roman citizens. The famous words of Cicero had passed into a proverb, and had immense weight everywhere: "To bind a Roman citizen is an outrage, to scourge him is a crime." The magistrates had evidently violated the Roman laws; but

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Paul only demanded, that as they had been publicly treated as guilty, the magistrates should come and publicly declare that they were innocent. This they readily did, seeing what wrong they had done. "And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city." The apostles readily complied with the magistrates' request, left the prison, and openly entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.*

We would only further add before leaving this memorable chapter, that it is very pleasant to find, in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the proofs of an attachment which bound them together, and which continued from "the first day" even until Paul's imprisonment at Rome. His affection for his beloved Philippians was wonderful. He addressed them as—"my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." And he acknowledges, with no small joy, their unwearied fellowship with him in the gospel, and the many practical proofs of their loving care and tender sympathy for himself. As early as his residence at Thessalonica they thought of his need. "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." Philippians iv. 15–19.

PAUL AT THESSALONICA AND BEREA.

Paul and Silas now directed their course to Thessalonica. Timothy and Luke appear to have remained behind in Philippi for a short time. Having passed

* See evangelistic papers on the leading characters of this chapter, *Things New and Old*, vol. xii. page 29—97.

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through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Paul and Silas arrived at Thessalonica. Here they found a synagogue. It was a commercial town of great importance, where many Jews resided. "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." The hearts of many were touched by his preaching; and a great multitude of devout Greeks, and women of high station, believed. But Paul's old enemy again appears. "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out unto the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." These verses may suffice to give us the *character* of the universal enmity of the Jews against the gospel and against Paul its chief minister.

The apostle had evidently preached to the Thessalonians the truth respecting the exaltation of Christ, and His coming again in glory: "Saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Hence the constant allusion to "the *coming* of the Lord," and to "the *day* of the Lord," in Paul's Epistles to that church. From what Paul says in his first Epistle we learn, that his labours were most abundant and greatly owned and blessed of the Lord to many souls. 1 Thessalonians i. 9, 10; ii. 10, 11.

The apostle now proceeded to Berea. Here the Jews were more noble. They examined what they heard by the word of God. There was great blessing here also.

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Many believed; but the Jews, like hunters after their prey, hastened from Thessalonica to Berea, and raised a tumult which forced Paul to leave the place almost immediately. Accompanied by some of the Berean converts, he directed his course to Athens. Silas and Timotheus were left behind.

PAUL'S VISIT TO ATHENS.

The appearance of the apostle in Athens is an event in his history of great importance. It was, in some respects, the capital of the world, and the seat of Grecian culture and philosophy; but it was also the central point of superstition and idolatry.

It is very interesting to observe, that the apostle was in no haste to enter upon his work here. He allowed time for reflection. Deep thoughts, and how to weigh up everything in the presence of God, and in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ, filled his mind. It was his first intention to wait for the arrival of Silas and Timotheus. He had sent back a message to Berea, that they were to come to him with all speed. But when he saw himself surrounded with temples, and altars, and statues, and idolatrous worship, he could keep silence no longer. As usual, he begins with the Jews, but also disputes daily with the philosophers in the market place. Christianity and paganism thus openly confront each other; and, be it observed, the apostle of Christianity was *alone in Athens;* but the place swarmed with the apostles of paganism; and so numerous were the objects of worship, that a satirist observed, "It is easier to find a god than a man in Athens."

Some scornfully derided what they heard, others listened and wished to hear more. "Then certain

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philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." Thus we learn what Paul in his daily conversation had been pressing on the attention of the people, and the different classes of philosophers. It was "Jesus, and the resurrection." These words had made the greatest impression, and remained the most distinctly in their minds. What a new thing, and what a blessed reality for souls! The *Person* of *Christ*; not a theory: the *fact* of the resurrection; not a gloomy uncertainty as to the future. The minister of Christ lays bare to the learned Athenians their fearful condition in the sight of the true God. Nevertheless, they sought to have a fuller and more deliberate exposition of these mysterious subjects, and they brought Paul unto Areopagus.

This place, we are told, was the most convenient and appropriate for a public address. The most solemn court of justice had sat from time immemorial on the hill of Areopagus. The judges sat in the open air, upon seats hewn out in the rock. On this spot many solemn questions had been discussed, and many solemn cases decided: beginning with the legendary trial of Mars, which gave to the place the name of "Mars' hill."

It was in this scene that Paul addressed the multitude. There is no moment in the apostle's history, or in the history of the first planting of Christianity, more deeply interesting or better known than this. Inspired by feelings for the honour of God, and filled with the knowledge of man's condition in the light of the cross, what must he have felt as he stood on Mars' hill? Wherever

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he turned his eyes, the signs of idolatry in its thousand forms rose up before him. He might have been betrayed, under the circumstances, to have spoken strongly; but he mastered his feelings, and refrained from intemperate language. Considering the fervency of his spirit, and the greatness of his zeal for truth, it was a remarkable instance of self-denial and self-command. But his Lord and Master was with him, though to the human eye he stood alone before the Athenians, and the many foreigners who flocked to that university of the world.

For wisdom, prudence, sound reasoning, and consummate skill, Paul's address stands alone in the annals of mankind. He did not begin by attacking their false gods, or by denouncing their religion as a Satanic delusion, and the object of his utter detestation. Zeal without knowledge would have done so, and been pleased with its own faithfulness. But in the address before us, we have an example of the best way of approaching the minds and hearts of ignorant and prejudiced persons in every age. May the Lord give wisdom to all His servants to follow it!

His opening words are both winning and reproving. "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." He thus begins by acknowledging that they had religious feelings, but that they were wrongly directed; and then speaks of himself as one who was ready to lead them to the knowledge of the true God. "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." He wisely selects for his text, the inscription, "*To the unknown God.*" This gives him an opportunity to commence at the lowest step in the ladder of truth. He speaks of the oneness of God, the Creator, and the relationship of man to Him. But he

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soon leaves the argument against idolatry, and proceeds to preach the gospel. And yet he is careful not to introduce the *name* of Jesus in his public address. He had done so fully in his more private ministrations: but he was now surrounded by the disciples and admirers of such names as Socrates, Plato, Zeno, and Epicurus—and he sacredly guards the holy name of Jesus from the risk of a comparison with such. He well knew that the name of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth was "to the Greeks foolishness." Nevertheless, it is easily seen, that towards the close of his address, the attention of the whole audience is concentrated on the *man Christ Jesus*, though His name is not mentioned in the whole speech. Thus he proceeds: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Here the patience of his audience failed—his discourse was interrupted. But the last impression left on their minds was one of eternal weight and importance. The inspired apostle addressed himself to the *consciences*, not to the intellectual curiosity, of the philosophers. The mention of the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment of the world, with such commanding power and authority, could not fail to trouble these proud and self-indulgent men. The essential principle, or the highest aim of the Epicurean philosopher, was to *gratify himself;* that of the Stoic, was a *proud indifference* to good and evil, pleasure and pain. Need we wonder then, that this remarkable assembly should have broken up, amidst the scornful derision of

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some, and the icy indifference of others? But in spite of all, Christianity had gained its first and noble victory over idolatry; and, whatever may have been the immediate results of Paul's speech, we know it has been blessed to many ever since, and that it shall yet bring forth much fruit in many souls, and continue to bear fruit to the glory of God for ever and for ever.

Paul now departs from among them. He does not appear to have been driven away by any tumult or persecution. The blessed Lord gave him to taste His own joy, and the joy of angels over penitent sinners. "Among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." But in the military city of Philippi, and the mercantile cities of Thessalonica and Corinth, the number of conversions seems to have been much greater than in the highly educated and polished city of Athens. This is deeply humbling to the pride of man, and to the boasted powers of the human mind. One Epistle was written to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, and two to the Corinthians: but we possess no letter written by Paul to the Athenians, and we do not read that he ever again visited Athens.

PAUL'S VISIT TO CORINTH.

The connection of Corinth with the history, teaching, and writings of our apostle, is almost as intimate and important as either Jerusalem or Antioch. It may be considered as his *European* centre. Here God had "much people;" and here Paul "continued a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." It was also when at Corinth that he wrote his first apostolic letters—THE TWO EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

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CORINTH, the Roman capital of Greece, was a large mercantile city, in immediate connection with Rome and the west of the Mediterranean, with Thessalonica and Ephesus on the Egean, with Antioch and Alexandria in the East. And by means of its two noted harbours, it received the ships of both the Eastern and Western Seas.*

Paul appears to have travelled alone to Corinth. If Timotheus came to him when at Athens (1 Thess. iii. 1), he was sent back again to Thessalonica; which place, as we shall soon see, was much on the apostle's heart at this time. Soon after his arrival, he unexpectedly found two friends and fellow labourers in Aquila and his wife Priscilla. At this particular time there must have been a greater number of Jews in Corinth than usual; "because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome." The Lord thus used the banishment of Aquila and Priscilla to provide a lodging for His lonely servant. They were of his own country—of his own trade—of his own heart and spirit. And being "of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent makers." Acts xviii.

Most gracious, and marvellous too, are the ways of the Lord with His servant. In a city of wealth and commerce—surrounded by native Greeks, Roman colonists, and Jews from all quarters, he quietly works at his own trade that he may be burdensome to none of them. Here we have at any rate one example of the deepest and loftiest spirituality, combined with diligent labour in the

* For full and minute geographical details, see *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson. We may also state here, that we follow them chiefly as to dates. It is the latest, the most comprehensive, and probably the best history of the great Apostle.

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common things of this life. What an example!—and what a lesson! His daily toil was no hindrance to his communion with God. None ever knew so well, or felt so deeply, the value of the gospel he carried with him: the issues of life and death were bound up with it; and yet he could give himself up to ordinary labour. But this he did, as really as preaching, for the Lord and for His saints. He frequently refers to this in his Epistles, and speaks of it as one of his privileges. "And in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia." 2 Corinthians ix. 7–12.*

* As some have made too much of this passage, and others too little, it may be well to note what we believe to be its true meaning. The apostle's resolution not to be burdensome to the saints, as here so strongly expressed, applies chiefly, if not exclusively, to the Corinthian church. An important principle was involved, but it was a *special*, not a *general* principle with the apostle. He acknowledges communications from other churches in the most grateful manner possible. (Phil. iv.) And in writing to the Corinthians afterwards, he says, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service. And when I was present with you, *and wanted*, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied."

The apostle, no doubt, had the best of reasons for thus refusing fellowship with the church at Corinth. We know there were "false apostles" and many enemies there; and that many grave and serious disorders had been allowed amongst them, which he strongly rebuked and sought to correct. Under these circumstances, lest his motives might be misconstrued, the apostle would rather work with his hands than receive support from the church at Corinth. And, "Wherefore?" he asks, "Because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire occasion." 2 Corinthians ix. 1—15.

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There is another thing connected with this feature of the apostle's course, which adds great interest to it. It is generally believed that he wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonians about this time; and, some think, the Epistle to the Galatians also. These are still before us as the true witnesses of his nearness to God and communion with Him, while he laboured, "working with his own hands." But the sabbath of rest comes—the workshop is closed, and Paul goes to the synagogue. This was his habit. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded both the Jews and the Greeks." But while Paul was thus employed, week-day and sabbath-day, Silas and Timotheus arrived from Macedonia. It is evident that they brought some assistance with them, which would meet the apostle's need at the time, and relieve him from such constant labour with his hands.

The coming of Silas and Timotheus seems to have encouraged and strengthened the apostle. His zeal and energy in the gospel are evidently increased. He "was pressed in the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ;" but they opposed his doctrine and blasphemed. This leads Paul to take his course with great boldness and decision. He shakes his raiment, in token of being pure from their blood, and declares that now he turns to the Gentiles. In all this, he was led of God, and acted according to His mind. So long as it was possible, he preached in the synagogue; but when he could no longer go there, he was compelled to use the most convenient place he could find. At Ephesus, he preached in the school of one Tyrannus: at Rome, he "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house;" and here, in Corinth, a proselyte, named Justus, opened his house to the rejected apostle.

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At this particular crisis in the apostle's history, he was favoured with another special revelation from the Lord Himself, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. But again his unrelenting enemies are astir. The great success of the gospel among the heathen excited the rage of the Jews against Paul; and they sought to use the coming of Gallio, a new governor, to accomplish their wicked intentions.

GALLIO was the brother of Seneca the philosopher, and, like him, given to much learning. He was wise, fair, and tolerant as a governor, though *contemptuous* in his treatment of sacred things. But the Lord, who was with His servant as He had said, used the unbelieving indifference of Gallio to defeat the malicious designs of the Jews, and to turn their false accusations against themselves. Thus frustrated in their evil purposes, the apostle had greater liberty, and less annoyance, in carrying on the work of the gospel. Its blessed fruits were soon manifest throughout the whole province of Achaia. 1 Thessalonians i. 8, 9.

PAUL'S PASSING VISIT TO EPHESUS.

The time had now come when Paul thought it right to leave Corinth and revisit Jerusalem. He had a great desire to be at the coming feast. But before his departure, he took a solemn farewell of the young assembly; promising, the Lord willing, to return.

Accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, he leaves Corinth

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in peace. But when at the harbour before sailing, a ceremony was performed which has given rise to much discussion. Paul, being under a vow, shaves his head at Cenchrea. In his own mind, and as led by the Spirit, we feel sure that he was far above and beyond a religion of feasts and vows; but he stooped in grace to the customs of his nation. To the Jew he becomes a Jew. Their constant opposition to his doctrine, and their violent persecution of himself, never weakened his affections for his beloved people: surely this was of God. While he sought in the energy of the Spirit to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he never forgot, in faithfulness to the word of God, to preach to the Jews first. He thus stands before us, as the bright expression of God's grace to the Gentiles, and of his lingering affections towards the Jews.

The missionary band land at Ephesus. Paul goes to the synagogue and reasons with the Jews. They seem inclined to hear him, but he has a strong desire to go up to Jerusalem, and keep the approaching feast. So he "bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem; but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus."

PAUL'S FOURTH VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

We are not supplied with any information by the sacred historian of what occurred in Jerusalem on this occasion. We are merely told, that when Paul had "gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch." But his intense desire to pay this visit may assure us of its great importance. He may have felt that the time had come, when the Jewish Christians, assembled at the feast, should hear a full account of the reception of the

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gospel among the Gentiles. Roman colonies and Greek capitals had been visited, and a great work of God had been accomplished. All this would be perfectly natural and right, but we need not seek to remove the veil which the Holy Ghost has drawn over this visit.

Paul goes down from Jerusalem to Antioch, visiting all the assemblies he had first formed; and thus, as it were, binds all its work together—Antioch and Jerusalem. "So far as we know, Paul's visit to Antioch was his last. We have already seen how new centres of christian life had been established by him in the Greek cities of the Egean. The course of the gospel is further and further towards the West, and the inspired part of the apostle's biography, after a short period of deep interest in Judea, finally centres in Rome."

THE RETURN OF PAUL TO ANTIOCH.

After a journey which had extended over the space of three or four years, our apostle returns to Antioch. He had travelled over a wide circuit, and disseminated Christianity in many flourishing and populous cities, and almost entirely by his own exertions. If the reader would keep up his interest in Paul's history, he must mark distinctly, and keep clearly before him, the great epochs in his life, and the main points in his different journeys. But before starting with Paul on his *third* missionary journey, it may be well to notice another great preacher of the gospel, who suddenly comes before us just at this time, and whose name, next to that of the apostle, is perhaps the most important in the early history of the church.

APOLLOS was a Jew by birth—a native of Alexandria. He was "an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures;

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but knowing only the baptism of John." He was devoted, earnest, upright, and publicly confessed and preached that which he knew; and the power of the Holy Ghost was manifested in him. It does not appear that he had received any appointment, ordination, or sanction of any kind, from either the twelve or Paul. But the Lord who is above all had called him, and was acting in him and by him. We thus see in the case of Apollos, the manifestation of the power and liberty of the Holy Spirit, without human intervention. It is well to note this. The idea of an exclusive clericalism is the practical denial of the liberty of the Spirit, to act by whom He will. But though burning with zeal and a powerful speaker, Apollos knew only what John had taught his disciples. This the Lord knew and provided teachers for him. Among those who were listening to his earnest appeals, two of Paul's well-instructed disciples were led to take a special interest in him. And though he was both learned and eloquent, he was humble enough to be instructed by Aquila and Priscilla. They invited him to their own house, and, no doubt in a humble spirit, "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." How simple!—now natural!—how beautiful! All is of the Lord. He ordered that Aquila and Priscilla should be left in Ephesus—that Apollos should come and stir up the people at Ephesus before the arrival of Paul; and, after being instructed, should go on to Corinth, and help on the good work there, which Paul had begun. Apollos watered what Paul had planted, and God gave abundant increase. Such are the blessed ways of the Lord in His thoughtful love and tender care of all His servants, and of all His assemblies.

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CHAPTER VI.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

A.D. 54.

HAVING "spent some time" in Antioch, he leaves that Gentile centre, and commences another missionary journey. Nothing is said of his companions on this occasion. He "went over all the country of Galatia, and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples;" and also giving directions for the collection on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem. (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.) In a short time he reached the centre of the work in Asia.

EPHESUS.—At this time it was the greatest city in Asia Minor, and the capital of the province. Owing to its central position, it was the common meeting-place of various characters and classes of men. By this time Apollos had departed to Corinth, but the remaining twelve of John's disciples were still in Ephesus. Paul speaks to them about their position. We must give a passing notice of what occurred.

John's baptism required repentance, but not separation from the Jewish synagogue. The gospel teaches that Christianity is founded on death and resurrection. First, the death of Christ, as accomplishing redemption; and our death and resurrection with Him; so as to place us in Him, and as Him, in the presence of God, cleansed by His precious blood from all our sins. Christian bap-

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tism is the significant and expressive symbol of these truths. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. ii. 12, 13.) As these men were entirely unacquainted with the foundation truths of Christianity, we suppose they had never mingled with Christians. The apostle, no doubt, explained to them the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. They believed the truth and received christian baptism. Then Paul, in his apostolic capacity, laid his hands on them—they were sealed with the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues and prophesied.

Immediately after the mention of this important occurrence, our attention is directed to the apostle's labours in the synagogue. During three months he preached Christ boldly there; reasoning and endeavouring to convince his hearers of all "the things concerning the kingdom of God." The hearts of some "were hardened," while others repented and believed; but as many of the Jews took the place of adversaries, and "spake evil of that way before the multitude," Paul acts in the most definite way. He "separated the 'disciples" from the Jewish synagogue, and formed them into a distinct assembly, and met with them "daily in the school of one Tyrannus." This is a deeply interesting and instructive action of the apostle; but he acts in the consciousness of the power and truth of God. The church in Ephesus is now perfectly distinct from both Jews and Gentiles. Here we see what the apostle elsewhere refers to in his exhortation, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor. x. 32.) Where this important distinction is not seen,

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there must be great confusion of thought, both as to the word and ways of God.

The apostle now appears before us as the instrument of the power of God in a remarkable and striking way. He communicates the Holy Ghost to the twelve disciples of John—he separates the disciples of Jesus and formally founds the church in Ephesus—his testimony to the Lord Jesus is heard in all Asia, both by Jews and Greeks —special miracles are wrought by his hands—diseases depart from many if they but touch the border of his garment—the power of the enemy disappears before the power that is in Paul, and the name of Jesus is glorified —the evil spirits acknowledge his power, and put his enemies to shame and loss—the consciences of the heathen are reached, and the enemy's power over them is gone—fear falls on many who "used curious arts," and they burn their books of magic, the cost of which amounts to nearly two thousand pounds in English money. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." (See Acts xix. 1–20.) Thus the power of the Lord was displayed in the person and mission of Paul, and his apostolate established beyond a question.

The apostle had now spent about three years of incessant labour in Ephesus. As he says himself when addressing the elders at Miletus, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." It is also supposed by some, that during this time he paid a short visit, and wrote his FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE TUMULT AT EPHESUS.

A great and blessed work had now been accomplished by the mighty energy of God's Spirit, through the

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instrumentality of His chosen servant Paul. The gospel had been planted in the capital of Asia, and it had spread throughout the whole province. The apostle now felt as if his work had been done there, and he longs to go to Rome, the capital of the West, and the great capital of the world. Greece and Macedonia had already received the gospel, but there was yet Rome. "After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome." Acts xix. 21.

But while Paul was thus making arrangements for another journey, the enemy was planning a fresh attack. His resources were not yet exhausted. Demetrius excites the thoughtless multitude against the Christians. A great tumult is raised—the passions of men are stirred up against the instruments of the testimony of God. The workmen of Demetrius raise the cry, that not only is their craft in danger, but that the temple of the great goddess Diana is in danger of being despised. When the multitude heard these things, they were filled with wrath, and cried, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The whole city was now filled with confusion; but Paul was mercifully preserved by his brethren, and by some of the chief rulers in Asia, who were his friends, from shewing himself in the theatre.

The Jews evidently began to fear, that the persecution might be turned against themselves; for the majority of the people knew not for what purpose they had come together. They therefore put forth a certain Alexander, probably with the intention of shifting the blame from themselves upon the Christians; but the moment the heathen discovered that he was a Jew, their fury was

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increased—the rallying cry was again raised, and for two whole hours the people shouted "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Fortunately for all parties, the town clerk was a man of great tact and admirable policy. He flattered, calmed, soothed, and dismissed the assembly. But to faith, it was God using the persuasive eloquence of a heathen magistrate to protect His servant and His many children there.

The far famed temple of Diana was reckoned by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world; the sun, it was said, saw nothing in his course more magnificent than Diana's temple. It was constructed of the purest marble, and was two hundred and twenty years in building. But with the spread of Christianity it sank into decay, and scarcely anything of it now remains to shew us even where it stood. The trade of Demetrius was to make small models in silver of the shrine of the goddess. These were set up in houses, kept as memorials, and carried about on journeys. But as the introduction of Christianity necessarily affected the sale of these models, the heathen artisans were instigated by Demetrius to raise a popular cry in favour of Diana and against the Christians.

PAUL'S DEPARTURE FROM EPHESUS FOR MACEDONIA.

Acts xx. After the cessation of the tumult, the danger being over, and the rioters dispersed, Paul sends for the disciples, embraces them, and departs for Macedonia. Two of the Ephesian brethren, Tychicus and Trophimus, seem to have accompanied him, and to have remained faithful to him through all his afflictions. They are frequently mentioned, and have a place in the last chapter of his last epistle, 2 Timothy iv.

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The sacred historian is exceedingly brief in his record of Paul's proceedings at this time. All the information which he gives us is compressed in the following words: —"He departed to go into Macedonia: and when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months." It is generally supposed that these few words embrace a period of nine or ten months—from the early summer of A.D. 57, to the spring of A.D. 58. But this lack of information is happily supplied by the apostle's letters. Those that were written on this journey supply us with many historical details, and what is more and better, they give us from his own pen, a living picture of the deep and painful exercises of mind and heart, through which he was then passing.

It appears that Paul had arranged to meet Titus at Troas, who was to bring him tidings direct from Corinth of the state of things there. But week after week passed, and Titus came not. We know something of the workings of that great mind and heart at this time, from what he says himself: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia." (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13.) His personal anxiety, however, did not hinder him from going on with the great work of the gospel. This is evident from verse 14–17.

At length the long expected Titus arrived in Macedonia —probably at Philippi. And now Paul's mind is relieved and his heart is comforted. Titus brings him better tidings from Corinth than he had expected to hear. The reaction is manifest—he is filled with praise.

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"Great is my boldness of speech toward you," he says, "great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." 2 Corinthians vii. 4–6.

Soon after this, Paul writes his SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS; which we find addressed not to them only, but to all the churches in all Achaia. They may have all been more or less affected by the condition of things at Corinth. Titus is again the apostle's willing servant, not only as the bearer of his second letter to the church at Corinth, but as taking a special interest in the collections then making for the poor. Paul, not only gives Titus strict charges about the collections, but writes two chapters on the subject (chap. viii. and ix.), though it was more deacons' than apostles' work. But, as he had said in answer to the suggestion of James, Cephas, and John, that he should remember the poor—"*The same*," he replied, "*which I was also forward to do.*"

The space which the apostle devotes to subjects connected with collections for the poor is remarkable, and deserves our careful consideration. It may be that some of us have overlooked this fact and suffered loss in our own souls thereby. Notice, for example, what he says of one church. We have good reason to believe that the *Philippians* from the very beginning *cared* for the apostle—they pressed him to accept their contributions for his support, from his first visit to Thessalonica, down to his imprisonment in Rome, besides their liberality to others.

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(See Phil. iv.; 2 Cor. viii. 1–4.) But some may imagine from this, that they were a wealthy church. Just the opposite. Paul tells us "How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." It was out of their deep poverty that they gave so liberally.

What the Philippians are in the Epistles, the poor widow is in the Gospels—two mites were her all. She could have given one and kept one, but she had an undivided heart, and she gave both. She too, gave out of her poverty; and wherever the gospel is preached, throughout the whole world, these things shall be told as a memorial of their liberality.

After Paul had sent off Titus and his associates with the Epistle, he remained himself in "those parts" of Greece, doing the work of an evangelist. His mind, however, was set on paying the Corinthians a personal visit; but he allowed time for his letter to produce its own effects, under the blessing of God. One of the objects of the apostle was to prepare the way for his personal ministry among them. It is generally thought, that it was during this period of delay that he fully preached the gospel of Christ round about unto Illyricum." (Rom. xv. 19.) It is probable that he reached Corinth in winter, according to His expressed intention. "It may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you." (1 Cor. xvi. 6.) There he abode three months.

All are agreed, we may say, that it was during these winter months, that he wrote his great EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS. Some say, that he also wrote his EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS at the same time. But there is great diversity of opinion amongst the chronologists on this

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point. From the absence of names and salutations, such as we have in the Epistle to the Romans, it is difficult to ascertain its date. But if it was not written at this particular time, we must place it earlier, not later. The apostle was surprised at their early departure from the truth. "I marvel," he says, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." His great disappointment is manifest in the warmth and spirit in which he writes his Epistle.

But we must return to the *history* of our apostle: the *niceties* of chronology we cannot enter upon in our "short papers." But after comparing the latest authorities, we give what seems to us the most reliable dates.

PAUL LEAVES CORINTH.

The apostle's work was now done at Corinth, and he prepares to leave it. His mind was bent upon going to Rome; but there was this mission of charity on his heart, and which he must attend to first. We are favoured with his own words on these different points. "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come unto you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." (Rom. xv.) The array of names in Acts xx. 4; Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus, are supposed to be brethren with the

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collections which had been made at the different places named. Instead of sailing straight to Syria, he goes round by Macedonia, because of the Jews who were lying in wait for him. His companions tarried for him at Troas. There he spent a Lord's day, and even a whole week, in order to see the brethren. We must notice briefly what took place at this stage of his journey. Two things, all important to the Christian, are connected with it—the Lord's day, and the Lord's supper. The historian, who was with Paul at this time, enters with unusual minuteness on the details of that day.

It is evident from this incidental notice, that it was the established custom of the early Christians, to come together on "the first day of the week," for the understood purpose of "breaking bread." We have here the *main object* and the *ordinary time* of their coming together. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." (See also 1 Cor. xvi. 2; John xx. 19; Rev. i. 10.) Even the apostle's preaching, precious as it was, is spoken of as a secondary thing. The remembrance of the Lord's love in dying for us, and all that into which He has brought us as risen again, was, and is, the first thing. If there be an opportunity for so ministering the word, as to gather up the thoughts and affections of the worshippers to Christ, it is well to embrace it; but the breaking of bread ought to be the first consideration, and the main object of the assembly. The celebration of the Lord's supper on this occasion was after sunset. In early times, it was observed in some places before daylight; in others, after sunset. But here the disciples were not obliged to meet in secret. "There were many lights in the upper chamber where

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they were gathered together, and Paul continued his speech until midnight, ready to depart on the morrow." It was an extraordinary occasion, and Paul avails himself of the opportunity to speak to them all night. The time had not come, as some one has said, when the warm earnest utterances of the heart were measured by the minute—when the burning agony of the preacher over lost souls was timed by the icy coldness of the mere professor, or the careless indifference of the worldly Christian. Eutychus, a young man, overcome with sleep, "fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead." This has been viewed by some as a *penalty for inattention;* but a miracle was wrought by Paul, and the young man was raised from a state of death by the power and goodness of God in His servant, and the friends were not a little comforted.

PAUL AT MILETUS.

The most important stage of this journey is Miletus, though the different places they pass or call at, are carefully noted by the sacred historian. Paul, being filled with the Spirit, gives directions for the journey. His companions willingly obey him, not as a master, but as one who directs in the humility of love, and in the wisdom of God. He arranges not to go to Ephesus, though that was a central place, for he had purposed in his heart to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But as the vessel was to be detained some time at Miletus, he sends for the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet him. The distance between the two places is said to be about thirty miles, so that two or three days would be required to go and come, but they had sufficient time for their meeting before the ship sailed.

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Thus the Lord thinks of His servants, and makes everything work together for their good and His own glory.

Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus is characteristic and representative. It demands our most careful study. It sets before us the deep and touching affection of the apostle, the position of the church at that time, and the work of the gospel among the nations. He exhorts them with unusual earnestness and tenderness; he felt he was addressing them for the last time; he reminds them of his labours among them in "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears." He warns them against false teachers and heresies—the grievous wolves who would enter in among them, and the men of themselves that would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."

As this testimony of Paul's is of the highest importance, and marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church, besides shedding divine light on all ecclesiastical systems, we give the thoughts of another on its wide and comprehensive bearing.

"The church was consolidated over a pretty large extent of country, and the church, in divers places at least, had taken the form of a regular institution. Elders were established and recognized. The apostle could send for them to come to him. His authority also was acknowledged on their part. He speaks of his ministry as a

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past thing—solemn thought! . . . . Thus, what the Holy Ghost here sets before us is, that now, when the detail of his work among the Gentiles to plant the gospel, is related as one entire scene among Jews and Gentiles, he bids adieu to the work; in order to leave those whom he had gathered together, in a new position, and, in a certain sense, to themselves. It is a discourse which marks the cessation of one phase of the church—that of apostolic labours—and the entrance into another; its responsibility to stand fast now that these labours had ceased; the service of the elders, whom 'the Holy Ghost had made overseers,' and, at the same time, the dangers and difficulties that would attend the cessation of apostolic labour, and complicate the work of the elders, on whom the responsibility would now more especially devolve.

"The first remark that flows from the consideration of this discourse is, that *apostolic succession is entirely denied by it.* Owing to the absence of the apostle, various difficulties would arise, and there would be no one in his place, to meet or to prevent these difficulties. *Successor, therefore, he had none.* In the second place, the fact appears that this energy, which bridled the spirit of evil, once away, devouring wolves from without, and teachers of perverse things from within, would lift up their heads and attack the simplicity and the happiness of the church; which would be harassed by the efforts of Satan, without possessing apostolic energy to withstand them. In the third place, that which was principally to be done for the hindrance of evil, was to feed the flock; and to watch, whether over themselves or over the flock, for that purpose. He then commends them—neither to Timothy nor to a bishop, but in a way that

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sets aside all official resources—to God and to the word of His grace. *This is where he left the church.* The free labours of the apostle of the Gentiles were ended. Solemn and affecting thought! He had been the instrument chosen of God to communicate to the world His counsels respecting the church, and to establish in the mind of the world this precious object of His affections, united to Christ at His right hand. What would become of it down here?"*

Acts xxi. With a fair wind, Paul and his companions sailed out from Miletus, while the sorrowing elders of Ephesus prepared for their journey homewards. With a straight course, they sailed to Coos, Rhodes, and thence to Patara and Tyre. From what took place there—so similar to the scene at Miletus—it is evident that Paul soon found his way to the hearts of the disciples. Though he had been only one week at Tyre, and previously unacquainted with the Christians there, he had gained their affections. "And they all brought us on our way," says Luke, "with wives and children, till we were out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed." It seems too, as if a spirit of prophecy had been poured out on these affectionate Tyreans, for they warned the apostle against going up to Jerusalem. After waiting there seven days, they came to Ptolemais, where they abode one day. At Cæsarea, they lodged in the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven. He is already well known to us, but it is not a little interesting to meet him again, after an interval of more than twenty years. Now he has four daughters, virgins, which prophesy. Here, Agabus the prophet predicted

* *The Present Testimony*, vol. viii. p. 405—407.

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Paul's imprisonment, and said, that "he should not go up to Jerusalem." All the disciples said the same thing and entreated him with tears not to go. But however much Paul's tender and sensitive heart must have been moved by the tears and the entreaties of his friends and of his own children in the faith, he suffered nothing to alter his resolution, or move him from his purpose. He felt bound in spirit to go, and ready to leave all consequences with the will of the Lord.

We now come to

PAUL'S FIFTH VISIT TO JERUSALEM. A.D. 58.

The apostle and his companions were gladly welcomed on their arrival at Jerusalem. "When we were come to Jerusalem," Luke observes, "the brethren received us gladly." The day following, Paul and his company visited James, at whose house the elders were present. Paul, as chief speaker, declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. But though they were greatly interested, and praised the Lord for the good news, they evidently felt *uneasy*. They at once called Paul's attention to the fact, that a great number of Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, were zealous observers of the law of Moses, and were strongly prejudiced against himself.

How to satisfy the prejudices of these Jewish Christians was now the important question between Paul and the elders. Multitudes of Jews, both converted and unconverted, they knew would come together when they heard of Paul's arrival. They had long believed the most serious and weighty charges against him—"that he taught all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to

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forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." What was now to be done? The elders proposed that Paul should publicly shew himself obedient to the law. This was the painful and perplexing position of the apostle of the Gentiles. What can he now do? Will the messenger of the gospel of the glory—the minister of the heavenly calling—stoop to the rules of Nazarite vows? This is the solemn and serious question. If he refuses compliance with their wish, the lurking suspicion of the Jews will be confirmed; if he acts according to their desires, he must humble himself—forget for the moment his high calling, yield to the ignorance, prejudice, and pride of the Judaizers. But what else can he do? He is in the very centre of a bigoted Judaism; and if mistaken, he honestly desires to win over the church at Jerusalem to a purer and loftier Christianity.

Many have been very free in their criticisms on the apostle's course at this time. But though it is our privilege, humbly to examine all that the sacred historian has written, some, we fear, have ventured too far in saying hard things of the apostle. We may reverently enquire, how far the will and the affections of Paul influenced him on this occasion, apart from the warnings of the Spirit through his brethren; but surely it becomes us to keep within the limits of what the Holy Spirit Himself has said. Let us now carefully view the outward facts which led the apostle to this eventful epoch in his life.

Rome had been long on his mind. He had a great desire to preach the gospel there. This was right—this was according to God—this was not of self—he was the

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apostle of the Gentiles. God had been working there most blessedly without an apostle, for as yet no apostle had visited Rome. Paul had been privileged to write an epistle to the Romans, and in that letter he expresses the most earnest desire to see them, and to labour among them. "For I long to see you," he says, "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." This was his state of mind and the object which he had before him; and which *we* must keep in view when studying this part of his history. Compare Romans i. 7–15; xv. 15–33.

THE END OF PAUL'S FREE LABOURS.

We have now come to the important question, and to the point on which Paul's future history turns. Will he go straight west to Rome, or will he go round by way of Jerusalem? All depends on this. Jerusalem was also on his heart. But if Christ had sent him far hence to the Gentiles, could the Spirit, on Christ's part, lead him to Jerusalem? It was just here, we believe, that the great apostle was permitted to follow the desires of his own heart; which desires were right and beautiful in themselves, but not according to the mind of God at the time. He loved his nation dearly, and especially the poor saints at Jerusalem; and having been greatly misrepresented there, he wished to prove his love for the poor of his people by bringing to them in person the offerings of the Gentiles. "When therefore," he says, "I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain." Surely, some will say, this was loving and praiseworthy! Yes, but on one side only, and that side, alas, was the side of nature, not of the Spirit. "And finding disciples, we tarried there

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seven days; *who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.*" This seems plain enough; but Paul inclined for the moment to the side of his affections for "the poor of the flock" in Jerusalem. Could there have been, we ask, a more *pardonable mistake?* Impossible! It was his love to the poor, and the pleasure of carrying to them the offerings of the Gentiles, that led him to go round by Jerusalem on his way to Rome. Nevertheless, it was a mistake, and a mistake that cost Paul his liberty. His free labours end here. He allowed the flesh its liberty, and God allowed the Gentiles to bind it with a chain. This was the Master's expression of truest love to His servant. Paul was too precious in His sight to be allowed to pass without His righteous dealings at such a time; and he was also made to prove, that neither Jerusalem nor Rome could be the metropolis of Christianity. Christ the Head of the church was in heaven, and there only could the metropolis of Christianity be. Jerusalem *persecuted* the apostle; Rome *imprisoned* and *martyred* him. Nevertheless, the Lord was with His servant for his own good, the advancement of the truth, the blessing of the church, and the glory of His own great name.

Here may we be permitted to offer one reflection? On how many histories, since Paul's fifth visit to Jerusalem, has this solemn scene been engraved! How many saints have been bound with chains of different kinds, but who can say for what, or why? All of us would have said—unless enlightened by the Spirit—that the apostle could not have been actuated by a more worthy motive in going round by Jerusalem on his way to Rome. But the Lord had not told him to do so. All hinges on this. How needful then to see, at every stage of our journey,

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that we have the word of God for our faith, the service of Christ for our motive, and the Holy Spirit for our guide. We will now return to the history of events.

We left Paul sitting with the elders in the house of James. They had suggested to him a mode of conciliating the Jewish believers, and of refuting the accusations of his enemies. Disloyalty to his nation and to the religion of his fathers were the chief charges brought against him. But under the surface of outward events, and especially having the light of the epistles shed upon them, we discover the root of the whole matter, in the enmity of the human heart against the grace of God. In order to understand this, we must notice that Paul's ministry was twofold. 1. His mission was to preach the gospel "to every creature which is under heaven"—it not only went far beyond the limits of Judaism, but it was in perfect contrast with the system. 2. He was also the minister of the church of God, and preached its exalted position, and its blessed privileges, as united with Christ, the glorified Man in heaven. These blessed truths, it will be seen, lift the soul of the believer far above the religion of the flesh, be it ever so painstaking —ever so abounding in rites and ceremonies. Vows, fasts, feasts, offerings, purifications, traditions, and philosophy, are all shut out as nothing worth before God, and opposed to the very nature of Christianity. This exasperated the religious Jew with his traditions, and the uncircumcised Greek with his philosophy; and the two united to persecute the true witness-bearer of this two-fold testimony. And so it has been ever since. The religious man with his ordinances, and the merely natural man with his philosophy, by a natural process, readily unite

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in opposing the witness of a heavenly Christianity. See Colossians i. ii.

If Paul had preached circumcision, the offence of the cross would have ceased; for this would have given them a place, and the opportunity of being something, and doing something, and even taking part with God in His religion. This was Judaism, and this gave the Jew his pre-eminence. But the gospel of the grace of God addresses man as already lost—as "dead in trespasses and sins"—and has no more respect to the Jew than to the Gentile. Like the sun in the firmament, it shines for all. No nation, kindred, tongue, or people, are excluded from its heavenly rays. Preach the gospel "to every creature which is under heaven," is the divine commission and the wide sphere of the evangelist; to teach those who believe this gospel, their *completeness* in Christ is the privilege and duty of every minister of the New Testament.

Having thus cleared the ground as to the motives, objects, and position of the great apostle, we will now briefly trace the remainder of his eventful life. The time has come when he is to be brought before kings and rulers, and even before Cæsar himself, for the name of the Lord Jesus.

PAUL IN THE TEMPLE.

In accordance with the proposal of James and the elders, Paul now proceeds to the temple with "the four men which had a vow." Thus we read: "Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them." On the com-

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pletion of the Nazarite's vow, the law required that certain offerings should be presented in the temple. These offerings involved considerable expense, as we may see from Numbers vi., and it was considered an act of great merit and piety for a rich brother to provide these offerings for a poor brother, and thereby enable him to complete his vow. Paul was not rich, but he had a large and tender heart, and he generously undertook to pay the charges of the four poor Nazarites. Such readiness on Paul's part to please some and help others, ought to have pacified and conciliated the Jews, and probably it would had there only been present such as were associated with James, but it had the opposite effect with the inveterate zealots ; they were only more incensed against him. The celebration of the feast had attracted multitudes to the holy city, so that the temple was thronged with worshippers from every land.

Among these foreign Jews were some from Asia, probably some of Paul's old antagonists from Ephesus, who were glad of an opportunity to be revenged on him who had formerly defeated them. Towards the end of the seven days wherein the sacrifices were to be offered, these Asiatic Jews saw Paul in the temple, and immediately fell upon him, "crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man, that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut." The whole city being now in an uproar, the crowd rushed furiously to the point of attack; the multitude were excited to madness, and but for their sacred care not to shed blood

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in the holy place, Paul would have been instantly torn to pieces. Their object now was to hurry him out of the temple, have the doors shut, and despatch him outside the sacred enclosure. But before their murderous plans were executed, help from the Lord arrived, and they were unexpectedly interrupted.

The sentries at the gates no doubt communicated at once to the Roman garrison, situated over against the temple, that there was a tumult in the court. The chief captain, Claudius Lysias, immediately ran to the spot in person, taking soldiers and centurions with him. When the Jews saw the chief captain and the Roman soldiers approaching they left off beating Paul. The governor, perceiving that he was the occasion of all this excitement, promptly secured him, and bound him with two chains, or chained him by each hand to a soldier. See Acts xii. 6.

This being done, Lysias proceeded to make inquiry as to the real cause of the disturbance, but, as no certain information could be obtained from the ignorant and excited crowd, he ordered Paul to be carried into the castle. The disappointed mob now made a tremendous rush after their victim. They saw him taken out of their hands, and so violently did they press upon the soldiers, that Paul was borne in their arms up the stairs of the castle ; meanwhile, deafening shouts arose from the enraged multitude below, as they had done nearly thirty years before; "Away with him, away with him."

At this moment of overwhelming interest, the apostle preserved great presence of mind, and perfectly controlled the agitation of his feelings. He acts prudently, without any compromise of truth. Just as they had reached the entrance to the castle, Paul most courteously addressed

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himself to the chief captain, and said, "May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people." Marvellous to say, this request was granted. Paul had already gained the respect of the Roman governor, if not great influence over his mind. But the hand of the Lord was in it; He was watching over His servant. Paul had thrown himself into the hands of his enemies, by seeking to please the believing Jews; but God was with him, and knew how to deliver him out of their power, and use him for the glory of His own great name. Acts xxi. 26–40.

PAUL'S SPEECH ON THE STAIRS OF THE CASTLE.

To the chief captain he had spoken in Greek; to the Jews he speaks in Hebrew. These little attentions and considerations are the beautiful blendings of love and wisdom, and ought to serve as a lesson for us. He was always ready to win, by "becoming all things to all men, that he might gain the more." We see the marvellous effects of his influence over the infuriated mob, as well as over the commanding officer. The moment he spoke to them, the whole scene was changed. He calmed the tumultuous sea of human passion by the sound of their sacred language. It fell like oil on the troubled waters; and there was immediately "a great silence." We have his noble defence, addressed to his brethren and fathers, given at length in Acts xxii. 1–21.

It will be observed in reading the address, that his

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countrymen listened with great attention, while he spoke to them of his early life, his persecution of the church, his mission to Damascus, his miraculous conversion, his vision in the temple, and his interview with Ananias; but the moment he mentioned his mission to the *Gentiles*, an outburst of unbounded indignation arose from the crowded area below, and silenced the speaker. They could not endure the thought of God's grace to the Gentiles. That hated name stung them to fury. Their national pride rebelled against the thought of uncircumcised heathens being made equal to the children of Abraham. They cried down with scornful contempt every argument, human or divine, that could have influenced their minds. In vain did the apostle lay great stress on what had taken place between himself and the devout Ananias. Every appeal was in vain, so long as the Gentiles were to be thus owned. A scene of the wildest confusion now followed. They cast off their outer garments, they threw dust into the air, and "lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."

The chief captain, seeing the frantic violence of the people, and not understanding what it meant, was thrown into new perplexity. He saw the results of a speech in the Hebrew tongue—which he probably did not understand—and, naturally concluding that his prisoner must be guilty of some enormous crime, he ordered him to be bound and scourged to make him confess his guilt. But this proceeding was instantly arrested by Paul making known the fact that he was a Roman citizen.

The soldiers who were engaged in binding him withdrew in alarm, and warned the governor as to what he was doing. Lysias came at once, "and said unto him,

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Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born." Lysias was now in a difficulty; he had violated a Roman law. To expose a citizen to such indignity was treason against the majesty of the Roman people. But the only way of saving Paul's life was by keeping him in custody; and he happily thought of another and a milder way of ascertaining the nature of his prisoner's offence.

PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.

On the following day, he "commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them." The policy of Lysias here is interesting. He is active in suppressing the tumult; he protects a Roman citizen; he shews deference to the religion and customs of the Jews. This blending of policy and courtesy in the haughty Roman, under such circumstances, is worthy of a moment's reflection; but we pass on.

Paul addresses the council with dignity and gravity; but with an evident expression of *conscious integrity*. "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." This unflinching sense of uprightness so enraged Ananias, the high priest, that he commanded those who stood near to strike him on the mouth. This arbitrary violation of the law on the part of the chief of the council so roused the apostle's feelings, that he fearlessly exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" It is evident that the high priest was not so

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clothed as to be recognized; therefore Paul excuses himself by his ignorance of the fact, and quotes the formal prohibition of the law: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

The apostle soon perceived, we are told, that the council was divided into two parties, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and therefore he cried out, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." This declaration, whether so intended or not, had the effect of dividing the assembly, and setting the one party against the other. And so fierce did their dissensions become, that some of the Pharisees actually took Paul's side, saying, "We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." The judgment hall immediately became the scene of the most violent contention, and the presence of Claudius Lysias was absolutely necessary. Paul is once more lodged in the castle.

So passed this eventful morning in the history of our apostle. In the evening, when alone, can we wonder if his heart was prone to sink within him? From what had taken place, and from the gloomy appearance of everything around him, the apostle never stood in greater need of the consolation and strength which the Master's presence always gives. But who knew this so well, or could feel so deeply for the lonely prisoner as the Master Himself? And so He appears in richest grace to comfort and cheer the heart of His servant. It was *divinely timed* comfort. The Lord stood by him, as He had done at Corinth, and as He afterwards did on his voyage to Rome; "and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear

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witness also at Rome." (Acts xviii. 9, 10; xxiii. 11; xxvii. 23, 24.) A conspiracy of more than forty men to assassinate Paul having been discovered, and all their wicked schemes confounded, Claudius Lysias immediately summoned his centurions and soldiers, and gave strict orders to have Paul conveyed safely to Cæsarea. The details of this matter are related by Luke with singular fulness. Acts xxiii. 12–25.

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE FELIX.

As some of our readers may have observed, the *character* of God's dealings with His servant somewhat changes here. It may be well to pause for a moment, and reverently inquire into the apparent causes of this change. And, as many have freely given their opinions on this difficult point, we will here quote a few lines from one who seems to give the mind of the Spirit.

"I believe, then, that the hand of God was in Paul's journey to Jerusalem; that, in His sovereign wisdom, He willed that His servant should undertake it, and also have blessing in it: but that the means employed to lead him into it, according to that sovereign wisdom, was the apostle's human affections for the people who were his kindred after the flesh; and that he was not led into it by the Holy Ghost acting on the part of Christ in the church. This attachment to his people, this human affection, met with that among the people which put it in its place. Humanly speaking, it was an amiable feeling; but it was not the power of the Holy Ghost founded on the death and resurrection of Christ. There, there was no longer Jew nor Gentile. Paul's affection was good in itself, but as a spring of action it did not come up to the height of the work of the Spirit, who, on Christ's

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part, had sent him afar from Jerusalem to the Gentiles in order to reveal the church as His body united to Him in heaven.

"He was the messenger of the heavenly glory, which brought out the doctrine of the church composed of Jews and Gentiles, united without distinction in the one body of Christ, thus blotting out Judaism; but his love for his nation carried him, I repeat, into the very centre of hostile Judaism, Judaism enraged against the spiritual equality.

"Nevertheless, the hand of God was doubtless in it: Paul, individually, found his level.

"That which Paul said before the council raises a tumult, and the chief captain takes him from among them. God has all things at His disposal—a nephew of Paul's, never mentioned elsewhere, hears of an ambush laid for him and warns him of it. Paul sends him to the chief captain, who expedites the departure of Paul under a guard to Cæsarea. God watched over him, but all is on the level of human and providential ways. There is not the angel as in Peter's case, nor the earthquake as at Philippi. *We are sensibly on different ground.*"*

The accusers of Paul were not long in finding their way to Cæsarea. "And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul." (Acts xxiv. 1.) In a short speech, full of flattery and insinuating art, Tertullus accuses Paul of sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple.

Felix then signified to Paul that he had an opportunity

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. iv. 84—95.

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of answering for himself. And now, we may say, the apostle of the Gentiles is once more in his right place. However humiliating his circumstances, he is still God's messenger to the Gentiles, and God is with His beloved servant. The Jews were silent; and Paul, in his usual straightforward manner, met the charges.

Felix, it appears, knew a good deal about these things, and it is evident that a strong impression was made on his mind. Many years before this, Christianity had found its way into the Roman army at Cæsarea (Acts x.), so that he probably knew something about it, and was convinced of the truth of Paul's statements; but he trifled with his convictions, and with his prisoner. He "deferred" further inquiry for the present, making some excuse about the coming of Lysias. Meanwhile, however, he gave orders, that Paul should be treated with kindness and consideration, and that his friends should be allowed free access to him.

Not many days after this, Felix entered the audience chamber with his wife Drusilla, and sent for Paul. They were evidently curious to hear him discourse "concerning the faith of Christ." But Paul was not the one to gratify the curiosity of a Roman libertine, and a profligate Jewish princess. The faithful apostle, in preaching Christ, spoke plainly and boldly to the conscience of his hearers. He had now an opportunity in his bonds which he could otherwise scarcely have obtained. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, *Felix trembled.*" And little wonder. If we are to believe the historians of his own day, Josephus and Tacitus, a more unprincipled or dissolute couple never sat before a preacher. But, though conscience-stricken, Felix remained impenitent. Fearful condition! "Go

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thy way," said he, "for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But that convenient season never came, though he frequently saw the apostle afterwards, and, we doubt not, gave him to understand that a bribe would procure his release. Little did the Roman governor think that his venal justice was to be recorded in the book of God, and handed down to all succeeding generations. His character is represented as mean, cruel, and dissolute; that in the indulgence of all kinds of wickedness, he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave. "But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix' room; and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE FESTUS AND AGRIPPA.

Immediately after the arrival of Festus in the province, he visited Jerusalem. There, the leading Jews seized the opportunity to demand Paul's return. Their plea, doubtless, was that he should be tried again before the Sanhedrim, but their real purpose was to kill him on the way. Festus refused their petition. He invited them, however, to go down with him to Cæsarea and accuse him there. The trial took place and resembles that before Felix. It is quite evident that Festus saw clearly enough, that Paul's real offence was connected with the religious opinions of the Jews, and that he had committed no offence against the law; but at the same time, being desirous to ingratiate himself with the Jews, he asks Paul whether he would go to Jerusalem to be tried there. This was little better than a proposal to sacrifice him to Jewish hatred. Paul, being well aware of this, at once appealed unto Cæsar—"*I appeal unto Cæsar.*"

Festus was no doubt surprised at the dignity and in-

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dependence of his prisoner. But it was his privilege as a Roman citizen, to have his cause transferred to the supreme tribunal of the Emperor at Rome. "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go."

So far as the eye of man can see, this was Paul's only resource under the circumstances. But the hand and purpose of the Lord were in it. Paul must bear witness for Christ and the truth in Rome also. Jerusalem had rejected the testimony to the Gentiles; Rome too must have its share in rejecting the same testimony, and in becoming the prison of the witness. But in all this Paul is highly favoured of the Lord. His position resembles that of his blessed Master, when He was given up to the Gentiles by the hatred of the Jews; only the Lord was perfect in it all, and He was in His true place before God. He came to the Jews—that was His mission: Paul was delivered *from* the Jews—that was the difference. Christ gave Himself up, as we read, "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." Part of Paul's commission runs thus:—"Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee." But Paul *returned* to "the people" in the energy of his human affections, after he had been placed outside of them in the energy of the Holy Ghost. (Acts xxvi. 17.) Jesus had taken him out from both Jew and Gentile, to exercise a ministry that united the two in one body in Christ. As Paul himself says, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek.

We now resume the history of the great apostle.

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PAUL APPEARS BEFORE AGRIPPA AND BERNICE.

It happened about this time that Agrippa, king of the Jews, and his sister Bernice, came to pay a complimentary visit to Festus. And as Festus knew not how to state Paul's case to the Emperor, he took the opportunity of consulting Agrippa, who was better informed than himself on the points in question. The Jewish prince, who must have known something of Christianity, and had no doubt heard of Paul himself, expressed a desire to hear him speak. Festus readily acceded to the request. "To-morrow," said he, "thou shalt hear him."

The apostle is now to have the privilege of bearing the name of Jesus before the most dignified assembly he has ever addressed. Jewish kings, Roman governors, military officers, and the chief men of Cæsarea assembled "with great pomp" to hear the prisoner give an account of himself to Agrippa. It was no mean audience, and it is perfectly clear that they regarded the prisoner as no mean person. Festus, having acknowledged the difficulty in which he found himself, referred the matter to the better knowledge of the Jewish king. Agrippa courteously signified to Paul that he was permitted to speak for himself. We have now come to one of the most interesting moments in the whole history of our apostle.

The dignity of his manner before his judges, though he stretched out a hand that was chained to a soldier, must have deeply impressed his audience. The depth of his humiliation only manifested more strikingly the moral elevation of his soul. He thought neither of his chain nor of his person. Perfectly happy in Christ, and

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burning with love to those around him, self and circumstances were completely forgotten. With a dignified deference to the position of those who surrounded him, he rose, in the honest declarations of a good conscience, infinitely above them all. He addresses himself to the *conscience* of his audience, with the boldness and uprightness of a man accustomed to walk with God, and to act for Him. The character and conduct of the governors are thrown into painful contrast with the character and conduct of the apostle, and shew us what the world is when unmasked by the Holy Ghost.

"I pass over in silence," says one, "the worldly egotism which betrays itself in Lysias and Festus, by the assumption of all sorts of good qualities and good conduct—the mixture of awakened conscience and the absence of principle in the governors—the desire to please the Jews for their own importance, or to facilitate their government of a rebellious people. The position of Agrippa and all the details of the history have a remarkable stamp of truth, and present the various characters in so living a style that we seem to be in the scene described; we see the persons moving in it. This, moreover, strikingly characterizes the writings of Luke."

Chapter xxvi. Paul addresses king Agrippa as one well versed in the customs and questions prevailing amongst the Jews; and he so relates his miraculous conversion and his subsequent career, as to act on the conscience of the king. By the clear and straightforward narrative of the apostle, he was not far from being convinced; his conscience was awakened; but the world and his own passions stood in the way. Festus ridiculed. To him it was nothing more than wild enthusiasm—a

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rhapsody. He interrupted the apostle abruptly, and "said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." The apostle's reply was dignified and self-possessed, but intensely earnest; and, with great wisdom and quickness of discernment, he appeals to Agrippa.

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner."

Then turning to the Jewish king, who sat beside Festus, he made this direct and solemn appeal to him—

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

For the moment, the king was carried away by the power of Paul's address, and by the sharpened sting of his appeals. Then Paul made his reply—a reply which stands alone. It is characterized by godly zeal—christian courtesy—burning love for souls, and great personal joy in the Lord.

"And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

With the expression of this noble wish, the conference closed—the meeting was dissolved. Agrippa had no desire to hear more. The appeals had been too pointed, too personal; and so mingled with dignity, affection, and solicitude, that he was overcome. Then "the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that

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sat with them." After a brief consultation, Festus, Agrippa, and their companions came to the conclusion that Paul was guilty of nothing worthy of death or even imprisonment. "This man," said Agrippa, "might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."

This was the Lord's care of His beloved servant. He would have his innocence proved and acknowledged by his judges, and fully established before the world. This being accomplished, the king and his companions resume their places in the world and its gaieties, and Paul returns to his prison. But never was his heart more happy or more filled with the spirit of his Master than at that moment.

PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME.
A.D. 60.

Acts xxvii. The time was now come for Paul's journey to Rome. No formal trial of the apostle had yet taken place. And, no doubt, wearied with the unrelenting opposition of the Jews—with two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea—with repeated examinations before the governors and Agrippa, he had claimed a trial before the imperial court. Luke, the historian of the Acts, and Aristarchus of Thessalonica, were favoured to accompany him. Paul was committed to the charge of a centurion named Julius, of the imperial band; an officer who, upon all occasions, treated the apostle with the greatest kindness and consideration.

It was then "determined" that Paul should be sent, along with "certain other prisoners," by sea to Italy. "And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched," says Luke, "meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia. And

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the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself." Loosing from Sidon they were forced to sail under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary, and come to Myra, a city of Lycia. Here the centurion had his prisoners transferred to a ship of Alexandria on her voyage to Italy. In this vessel, after leaving Myra, they "sailed slowly many days," the weather being unfavourable from the first. But running to the leeward of Crete, they safely reached "the Fair Havens."

Winter was now near, and it became a serious question what course should be taken—whether they should remain at Fair Havens for the winter, or seek some better harbour.

Here we must pause for a moment and notice the wonderful position of our apostle in this serious consultation. As before Festus and Agrippa, he appears before the captain, the owner, the centurion, and the whole crew, as having the mind of God. He counsels, directs, and acts, as if he were really the master of the vessel, in place of being a prisoner in the custody of soldiers. He advised that they should remain where they were. He warned them that they would meet with violent weather if they ventured out to the open sea—that much injury would be done to the ship and cargo, and much risk to the lives of those on board. But the master and the owner of the ship, who had the greatest interest in her, were guided by circumstances and not by faith; they were willing to run the risk of seeking a more commodious harbour to winter in, and the centurion naturally deferred to their judgment. All were against the judgment of the man of faith—the man of God—the man

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who was speaking and acting for God. Even the circumstances in the scene around them seemed to favour the opinion of the sailors rather than that of the apostle. But nothing can falsify the judgment of faith. It must be true in spite of every circumstance.

It was therefore resolved by the majority that they should leave Fair Havens, and sail to Port Phenice, as a more secure winter harbour. The wind changed just at this moment. Everything seemed to favour the sailors. "The south wind blew softly;" so sanguine were they, Luke tells us, that they supposed their purpose was already accomplished. (Ver. 13.) They accordingly weighed anchor and with a soft breeze from the south, the vessel, with her "two hundred threescore and sixteen souls" on board, left the port of Fair Havens. But scarcely had she rounded Cape Matala, a distance of only four or five miles, when a violent wind from the shore caught the vessel, and tossed her in such a manner that it was no longer possible for the helmsman to make her keep her course. And as Luke observes, "We let her drive," that is, they were compelled to let her run before the wind.

But our chief concern here is with Paul as the man of faith. What must have been the thoughts and feelings now of his fellow-passengers? They had trusted to the wind, and they must now reap the whirlwind. The solemn counsels and warnings of faith had been rejected. Many, alas! heedless of the warning here recorded, and under the flattering wind of favourable circumstances, have launched on the great voyage of life, utterly regardless of the voice of faith. But like the fawning wind that betrayed the vessel from the harbour, all soon changed into a furious tempest on the troubled sea of life.

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THE STORM IN THE SEA OF ADRIA.

The term "Euroclydon" given to this tempestuous wind, indicates, we are told, a storm of the utmost violence. It was accompanied by the agitation and whirling motion of the clouds, and by great commotion in the sea, raising it in columns of spray. The sacred historian now proceeds to give an accurate account of what was done with the vessel in these perilous circumstances. Having run to the leeward of Clauda, they may have escaped for a little the violence of the tempest. This would give them an opportunity to make every preparation for weathering the storm.

The day after she left Clauda—the violence of the storm continuing—they began to lighten the ship by throwing overboard whatever could be spared. All hands seem to have been at work. "And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day *we* cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."

"His race performed, the sacred lamp of day
Now dipt in western clouds his parting ray;
His languid fires, half lost in ambient haze,
Refract along the dusk a crimson blaze:
Till deep immerged the sinking orb descends,
And cheerless night o'er heaven her reign extends;
Sad evening's hour, how different from the past!
No flaming pomp, no blushing glories cast,
No ray of friendly light is seen around;
The moon and stars in hopeless shade are drown'd."

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Nothing could be more dreadful to ancient mariners than the continued over-clouded sky, as they were accustomed to be guided by their observation of the heavenly bodies. It was at this moment of perplexity and despair that the apostle "stood forth" and raised his voice amidst the storm. And from his word of sympathy we learn, that all their other sufferings were aggravated by the difficulty of preparing food. "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." Verse 21–26.

THE SHIPWRECK.

The shipwreck was not far distant. "When the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms." Fourteen days and nights this heavy gale continued without abatement; during which time their sufferings must have been great beyond description.

At the close of the fourteenth day, "about midnight," the sailors heard a sound which indicated that they were

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PAUL AT MELITA—NOW MALTA.

Acts xxviii. The inhabitants of the island received the shipwrecked strangers with no small kindness, and immediately lighted a fire to warm them. The sacred historian gives us a living picture of the whole scene. We see the persons described moving in it. The apostle gathering sticks for the fire—the viper fastening on his hand—the barbarians first thinking him a murderer, and then a god from the sting being harmless. Publius, the chief man of the island, lodged them courteously three days; and his father, who lay sick of a fever, was healed by Paul laying his hands on him and praying for him. The apostle was enabled to work many miracles during his stay on the island; and the whole company, for his sake, were loaded with many honours. We see God is with His beloved servant, and he exercises his accustomed power among the barbarians. As the concluding part of Paul's journey to Rome is so prosperous, that scarcely any incident in it is recorded, we will only notice it briefly.

After a three months' stay in Malta, the soldiers and their prisoners left in a ship of Alexandria for Italy. They touched at Syracuse, where they tarried three days; and at Rhegium, from which place they had a fair wind to Puteoli. Here they "found brethren," and while they were spending a few days with them, enjoying the ministry of brotherly love, the news of the apostle's arrival reached Rome. The Christians at once sent forth some of their number, who met Paul and his friends at Appii Forum and the Three Taverns. A beautiful instance and illustration of the fellowship of saints. What must have been the feelings of our apostle on this first introduction to the Christians from the church at Rome!

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His long cherished desire was at last accomplished; his heart was filled with praise; "He thanked God," as Luke says, "and took courage."

PAUL'S ARRIVAL AT ROME.

Along the Appian Road, most probably, Paul and his company travelled to Rome. On their arrival, "the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard:* but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." Though he was not released from the constant annoyance of being chained to a soldier, every indulgence compatible with his position was allowed him.

Paul was now privileged "to preach the gospel to them that were at Rome also;" and proceeded without delay to act upon his divine rule—"to the Jew first." He sends for the chief of the Jews and explains to them his true position. He assures them that he had committed no offence against his nation, or the customs of the fathers; but that he was brought to Rome to answer certain charges made against him by the Jews in Palestine: and so unfounded were the charges, that even the Roman Governor was ready to set him free, but the Jews opposed his liberty. In fact it was, as he said, "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." His only crime had been his firm faith in the promises of God to Israel through the Messiah.

The Roman Jews, in reply, assured Paul that no report to his prejudice had reached Rome, and that they desired

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to hear from himself a statement of his faith; adding, that the Christians were everywhere spoken against. A day was therefore fixed for a meeting at his own private lodgings. At the appointed time many came, "to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." But the Jews at Rome, as at Antioch and Jerusalem, were slow of heart to believe. "And some believed the things which were spoken and some believed not." But how earnestly and unweariedly he laboured to win their hearts for Christ! From morning till evening he not only preached Christ, but sought to persuade them concerning Him. He sought, we may be sure, to persuade them concerning His Godhead and manhood—His perfect sacrifice—His resurrection, ascension, and glory. What a lesson and what a subject for the preacher in all ages! Persuading men concerning Jesus from morning till evening.

The condition of the Jews is now set before us for the last time. The judgment pronounced by Esaias was about to fall on them in all its withering power—a judgment under which they lie to this day—a judgment which shall continue until God interpose to give them repentance, and to deliver them by His grace to the glory of His own name. But, in the meantime, "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it;" and, as we know, blessed be His name, they have heard it; we ourselves are witnesses of it.*

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him; preaching

* See *Introductory Lectures to the Acts*, by W. Kelly.

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the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

These are the last words of the Acts. The scene on which the curtain falls, is most suggestive—the opposition of Jewish unbelief to the things which concerned their soul's salvation: suggestive alas! of what soon befell them. And here, too, ends the history of this precious servant of God, so far as it has been directly revealed. The voice of the Spirit of truth on this subject becomes silent. Our further knowledge of Paul's subsequent history must be gathered almost exclusively from his later Epistles; and from these we learn more than mere history; they give us a blessed insight into the feelings, conflicts, affections, and sympathies of the great apostle, and of the condition of the church of God generally, down to the period of his martyrdom.

THE BOOKS OF THE ACTS *TRANSITIONAL.*

But here we must pause and contemplate for a moment our apostle as a prisoner in the imperial city. The gospel had now been preached from Jerusalem to Rome. Great changes had taken place in the dispensational ways of God. The book of the Acts is *transitional* in its character. The Jews, we see, are now set aside, or rather they have set themselves aside by their rejection of that which God was setting up. The counsels of His grace towards them, no doubt, abide for ever sure; but in the meantime, *they* are cast off, and others come in and take the place of blessed relationship with God. Paul was a witness of God's grace to Israel; he was himself an Israelite; but also chosen of God to introduce something entirely new—*the Church, the body of Christ,*

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"Whereof I was made a minister .... that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. iii. 7–9.) This new thing set aside all distinction between Jew and Gentile, as sinners and in the *oneness* of this body. The hostility of the Jews to these truths never abated, as we have fully seen; and the results of this enmity we have also seen. The Jews disappear from the scene entirely; and the church becomes the vessel of God's testimony on the earth, and His habitation by the Spirit. (Eph. ii. 22.) Individual Jews, of course, who believe in Jesus, are blessed in connection with a heavenly Christ and the "*one body*," but Israel for a time is left without God, and without present communication with Him. The Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians fully set forth this doctrine; especially Romans, chapters ix., x., xi. We now return to

PAUL'S OCCUPATION DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT.

Though a prisoner, he was allowed the freest intercourse with his friends, and he was then surrounded by many of his oldest and most faithful companions. From the epistles we learn that Luke, Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphras, Aristarchus, and others, were with the apostle at this time. Still, we must remember that he was, as a prisoner, chained to a soldier and exposed to the rude control of such. Owing to the long delay of his trial, he was in this condition for two years; during which time he preached the gospel and opened up the scriptures to the congregations which came to hear him; and wrote several epistles to churches in distant places.

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Having fully and faithfully discharged the duty which he owed to the Jews, the favoured people of God, he addressed himself to the Gentiles; though not, of course, to the exclusion of the Jews. His door was open from morning till night to all who would come and hear the great truths of Christianity. And in some respects he never had a better opportunity; for being under the protection of the Romans, the Jews were not allowed to molest him.

The effects of Paul's preaching, through the Lord's blessing, were soon manifest. The Roman guards, the household of Cæsar, and "all other places" were blessed through his means. "I would ye should understand, brethren," he writes to the Philippians, "that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace [or, Cæsar's court, see margin], and in all other places." And again, the apostle says, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household." (Phil. i. 12, 13; iv. 22.) The blessing appears to have been first manifested in the prætorium, or amongst the prætorian guards. "My bonds in Christ are manifest in *all Cæsar's court*"—the quarters of the guards and household troops. The glorious gospel which Paul preached was heard by the whole camp. Even the kind prefect Burrus, with his intimate friend Seneca, Nero's tutor, may have heard the gospel of the grace of God. Paul's courteous manners, and great abilities, both natural and acquired, were well fitted to attract both the statesman and the philosopher. And being there two whole years gave them many opportunities.

With nearly the whole of the troops, we may say, he

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must have been personally acquainted. With every change of guard, the door for the gospel opened wider and wider. Being constantly chained to one of the soldiers as his keeper, and the guard being duly relieved, he thus became acquainted with many; and with what love and earnestness, and burning eloquence, he must have spoken to them of Jesus and of their need of Him. But we must wait till the morning of the first resurrection to see the results of Paul's preaching there. The day will declare it, and God shall have all the glory.

The apostle gives us also to know that the gospel had penetrated into the palace itself. There were saints in Cæsar's household—Christianity was planted within the imperial walls; "and in all other places." Yes, in "all other places," says the sacred historian. Not only was Paul thus labouring within the imperial precincts, but his companions, whom he styles his "fellow-labourers," were no doubt preaching the gospel in "all other places," in and around the imperial city; so that the success of the gospel must be ascribed to the efforts of others, as well as to the unwearied exertions of the great apostle in his captivity.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE, ONESIMUS.

But of all the converts which the Lord gave to the apostle in his bonds, none of them seem to have so entirely won his heart, as the poor runaway slave, Onesimus. Beautiful picture of the strength, the humility, and the tenderness of divine love in the heart, which works by the Spirit, and sweetly shines in all the details of individual life! The apostle's success in the imperial palace weakens not his interest in a young disciple from the lowest condition of society. No portion of the com-

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munity were more depraved than the slaves; but what must have been the associates of a fugitive slave in that profligate city? Yet from these lowest depths, Onesimus is drawn forth by the unseen hand of eternal love. He crosses the path of the apostle, hears him preach the gospel, is converted, devotes himself at once to the Lord and to His service, and finds in Paul a friend and brother, as well as a master and teacher. And now shine forth the virtues and the value of Christianity; and the sweetest applications of the grace of God to a poor, friendless, destitute, fugitive slave.

What is Christianity? we may enquire; and whence its origin, in the view of such a new thing in Rome—in the world? Was it at the feet of Gamaliel that Paul so learnt to love? No, my reader, but at the feet of Jesus. Would to God that the eloquent historian of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," had entered into this scene, and learnt to admire, in place of scornfully to ridicule, divine Christianity! If we think for a moment of the apostle's labours at this time—of his age—of his infirmities—of his circumstances: to say nothing of the lofty subjects, and the immense foundation truths, that were then occupying his mind; we may well admire the grace that could enter into every detail of the relationships of master and slave, and that with such delicate consideration of every claim. The letter he sent with Onesimus to his injured master Philemon, is one of the most touching ever written. Looking at it simply as such, we are at a loss whether most to admire the warmth and earnestness of his affections, the delicacy and justness of his thoughts, or the sublime dignity which pervades the whole epistle.

We now refer for a moment to the

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EPISTLES THAT WERE WRITTEN DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT.

There can be no reasonable doubt, that THE EPISTLES TO PHILEMON, TO THE COLOSSIANS, TO THE EPHESIANS, and to the PHILIPPIANS were written towards the latter part of Paul's imprisonment at Rome. He refers to his "*bonds*" in them all, and repeatedly to the expectation of his release. (Compare Philemon 22; Col. iv. 18; Eph. iii. 1; iv. 1; vi. 20; Phil. i. 7, 25; ii. 24; iv. 22.) Besides he must have been long enough at Rome for the news of his imprisonment to have reached his affectionate Philippians, and for them to have sent him relief.

The first three are supposed to have been written some time before that to the Philippians. An immediate issue of his cause is more distinctly spoken of in his Epistle to them. "Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." (Phil. ii. 23, 24.) The first three may have been written about the spring of A.D. 62, and sent by Tychicus and Onesimus; and the last in the autumn and sent by Epaphroditus.

The Epistle to the HEBREWS is also supposed by some to have been written about the same time, and every consideration leads to the conclusion that Paul was the writer. The expression at the close of the epistle, "they of Italy salute you," seems decisive as to where the writer was when he wrote it. And the following passages seem decisive as to the time: "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty: with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you." Compare this with what Paul wrote to the Philippians—"I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you .... so soon as I shall

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see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." We can scarcely doubt that these passages were written by the same pen about the same time, and that they refer to the same intended movements. But we do not press this point. One thing, however, is evident—that the epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as the temple was standing, and the temple worship going on undisturbed. Compare chap. viii. 4; ix. 25; x. 11; xiii. 10–13.

PAUL'S ACQUITTAL AND RELEASE.

After fully four years' imprisonment, partly in Judea and partly at Rome, the apostle is once more at liberty. But we have no particulars as to the character of his trial, or the ground of his acquittal. The sacred historian tells us that he dwelt two whole years in his own hired house; but he does not say what followed at the close of that period. Was it followed by the apostle's condemnation and death, or by his acquittal and liberation? This is the question, and the only certain answer to this question must be gathered chiefly from the Pastoral Epistles. The First to Timothy and that to Titus appear to have been written about the same time; and the Second to Timothy somewhat later.

It is now admitted, we believe, by nearly all who are competent to decide on such a question, that Paul was acquitted, and that he spent some years in travelling, at perfect liberty, before he was again imprisoned and condemned. And though it is difficult to trace the footsteps of the apostle during that period, still we may draw certain conclusions from his letters, without encroaching on the domain of conjecture. Most likely he travelled

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rapidly and visited many places. During the lengthened period of his imprisonment, much mischief had been done by his enemies in the churches which he had been the means of planting. They required his presence, his counsel, and encouragement. And from what we know of his energy and zeal, we are well assured that no labour would be spared in visiting them.

PAUL'S DEPARTURE FROM ITALY.

When writing to the Romans, before his imprisonment, Paul expressed his intention of passing through Rome into *Spain*. "Whensoever I take my journey into *Spain*," he says, "I will come to you." Again, "When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into *Spain*." (Rom. xv. 24, 28.) Some have thought that he did go to Spain immediately after his release. The principal evidence adduced in favour of this hypothesis is supplied by Clement, a fellow-labourer, mentioned in Philippians iv. 3, who was afterwards Bishop of Rome. This writer speaks of Paul as having preached the gospel in *the east and in the west*:—that he had instructed *the whole world;* meaning, no doubt, the Roman Empire: and that he had gone to *the extremity of the west*, meaning *Spain*. As Clement was Paul's own disciple and fellow-labourer, his testimony is worthy of our respect; still it is not scripture, and therefore not in itself conclusive.

2. From Paul's more recent letters, he seems to have altered his plans, and to have given up the idea of going to *Spain*, at least for a time. This we gather chiefly from the Epistles to Philemon and to the Philippians. To the former he writes, "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall

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be given unto you." (Ver. 22.) He here gives Philemon to expect that he may soon be with him in person. To the Philippians he writes, and speaking of Timothy he adds, "Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." Again, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state." (Chap. ii. 23, 24, 19.) The intended movements of the apostle and his beloved Timothy seem quite clear from these passages. It was evidently the purpose of the apostle to dispatch Timothy to Philippi as soon as the trial was over, and to remain in Italy himself until Timothy returned with the report of their state.

3. It may reasonably be expected that Paul fulfilled the intention which he so lately expressed; and that he visited the churches in Asia Minor, some of which, as yet, had not seen his face in the flesh. Having accomplished the objects of his mission to Asia Minor, some have thought that then he may have undertaken his long-meditated journey into *Spain;* but of this we have no reliable information, and mere conjecture is of no value.

4. Another theory is, that he went straight from Italy to Judea, and thence to Antioch, Asia Minor, and Greece. This scheme is founded chiefly on Hebrews xiii. 23, 24. "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. . . . They of Italy salute you." It is also supposed that while waiting at Puteoli for embarkation, immediately on the return of Timothy, tidings reached the apostle that a great persecution had broken out against the Christians

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in Jerusalem. This sad intelligence so filled the heart of Paul with sorrow, that he wrote at once his famous letter to them—THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS. Shortly after this, Timothy arrived, and Paul and his companions sailed for Judea.*

THE PLACES VISITED BY PAUL DURING HIS LIBERTY.

Having stated these different theories for the reader's examination, we will now notice the places mentioned in the Epistles as visited by Paul.

1. At some time after leaving Rome, Paul and his companions must have visited Asia Minor and Greece. "As I besought thee still to abide at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." (1 Tim. i. 3.) Feeling, it may be, somewhat anxious about his son Timothy, and the weight of the responsibilities of his position at Ephesus, he sends him a letter of encouragement, comfort, and authority from Macedonia—THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

2. Some time after this, Paul visited the island of Crete in company with Titus, and left him there. He also, very soon after, sent him a letter of instruction and authority, THE EPISTLE TO TITUS. Timothy and Titus may be considered as delegates or representatives of the apostle. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Titus i. 5.

3. Paul was intending to spend a winter at a place called Nicopolis. "When I shall send Artemas unto

* For particulars of the persecution referred to, see Josephus, Ant. xx., 9, 1.

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thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter." Titus iii. 12.

4. He visited Troas, Corinth, and Miletum. "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments .... Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." 2 Timothy iv. 13, 20.

PAUL'S SECOND IMPRISONMENT AT ROME.

It is supposed by some that the apostle was arrested at Nicopolis, where he intended to spend the winter, and thence carried a prisoner to Rome. By others, it is supposed that after wintering at Nicopolis, and visiting the places above mentioned, he returned to Rome in a state of personal liberty, but was arrested during the Neronian persecution and thrown into prison.

The precise charge now made against the apostle, and for which he was arrested, we have no means of ascertaining. It may have been simply on the charge of being a Christian. The general persecution against the Christians was now raging with the utmost severity. It was no longer about certain questions of the law, and under the mild and humane prefect Burrus; but he was now treated as an evil-doer—as a common criminal. "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds." And very different to the bonds of his first imprisonment, when he dwelt in his own hired house.

Alexander—of Ephesus we believe—had evidently something to do with his arrest. He was either one of his accusers, or, at least, a witness against him. "Alexander the coppersmith," he writes to Timothy, "did me much evil"—"exhibited much evil mindedness towards me." Ten years before this he had stood forward as the

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open antagonist of the apostle in Ephesus. (Acts xix.) He may now have sought his revenge by laying information against the apostle before the prefect. That it was the same Alexander of Ephesus seems clear from the charge to Timothy; "of whom be thou ware also." 2 Timothy iv. 14, 15.

During the apostle's first and lengthened imprisonment, he was surrounded by many of his oldest and most valued companions; whom he styles "fellow-labourers and fellow-prisoners." By means of these, his messengers, though chained to a single spot himself, he kept up a constant intercourse with his friends throughout the empire, and with Gentile churches who had not seen his face in the flesh. But his second imprisonment was a perfect contrast to all this. He had parted from all his ordinary companions. Erastus abode at Corinth; Trophimus had been left at Miletum sick; Titus had gone to Dalmatia; Crescens to Galatia; Tychicus had been dispatched to Ephesus; and the lukewarm Demas had forsaken him, "having loved this present world."

The apostle was now almost entirely alone. "Only Luke is with me," he says. But the Lord thought of His deserted and solitary servant. A bright beam, as from the fountain of love, shines amidst the darkness and dreariness of his prison. There was one faithful amidst the general defection, and one who was not ashamed of the apostle's chain. How peculiarly sweet and refreshing to the heart of the apostle must the ministry of Onesiphorus have been at this time! It can never be forgotten. Onesiphorus and his house—which Paul links with himself—shall be held in everlasting remembrance; and shall reap the fruit of his courage and devotedness to the apostle for ever and for ever.

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"I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Matthew xxv. 31–46.

Concerning the circumstances of Paul's trial we have no certain information. Most probably in the spring of A.D. 66 or 67, Nero took his seat on the tribunal, surrounded with his jurors, and the imperial guard; and Paul was brought into the court. We have reason to believe that the large space was filled with a promiscuous multitude of Jews and Gentiles. The apostle stood once more before the world. He had again the opportunity of proclaiming to all nations that for which he had been made a prisoner. "That all the Gentiles might hear." Emperors and senators, princes and nobles, and all the great ones of the earth, must hear the glorious gospel of the grace of God. All that the enemy has done becomes a testimony to the name of Jesus. Those who were otherwise inaccessible hear the gospel preached with power from on high.

Fain would we dwell on this wonderful scene for a few moments. Never before had there been such a witness, and such a testimony, in Nero's judgment-hall. The wisdom of God in turning all the efforts of the enemy into such a testimony is most profound; while His love and grace in the gospel shine ineffable and alike to all classes. The apostle himself commands our devout admiration. Though at this moment his heart was broken by the unfaithfulness of the church, he stood forth, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Though he had been forsaken by men, the Lord stood by him and strengthened him. He boldly confronted his enemies; pleaded in his own cause, and the cause of the gospel. He had an opportunity to speak of Jesus, of His death and resurrection, so that the heathen multitude might

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hear the gospel. His age, his infirmities, his venerable form, his fettered arm, would all tend to deepen the impression of his manly and straightforward eloquence. But, happily, we have an account from his own pen of the first hearing of his defence. He writes thus to Timotheus immediately after: "At my first answer [when I was first heard in my defence] no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that all the Gentiles might hear;* and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." 2 Timothy iv. 16, 17.

"Look, now, and see Christ's chosen saint
In triumph wear his Christ-like chain;
No fear lest he should swerve or faint;
His life is Christ, his death is gain."

THE MARTYRDOM OF PAUL.

Although we have no record of the second stage of his trial, we have reason to believe that it soon followed the first; and that it ended in his condemnation and death. But THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY is the divine record of what was passing in his deeply exercised mind at this solemn moment. His deep concern for the truth and church of God; his pathetic tenderness for the saints, and especially for his beloved son Timothy; his triumphant hope in the immediate prospect of martyrdom, can only be told in his own words. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

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righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Chapter iv. 6–8.

The tribunal of Nero here fades from his sight. Death in its most violent form has no terror for him. Christ in glory is the object of his eye and of his heart—the source of his joy and of his strength. His work was finished; and the toils of his love were ended. Though a prisoner and poor—though aged and rejected—he was rich in God; he possessed Christ, and in Him all things. The Jesus whom he had seen in glory at the commencement of his course, and who had brought him into all the trials and labours of the gospel, was now his possession and his crown. The unrighteous tribunal of Nero, and the blood-stained sword of the executioner, were to Paul but as the messengers of peace, who had come to close his long and weary path, and to introduce him into the presence of Jesus in glory. The time was now come for the Jesus that loved him to take him to Himself. He had fought the good fight of the gospel to the end; he had finished his course; it only remained for him to be crowned, when the Lord, the righteous judge, appears in glory.

"In all things more than conquerors
Through Him that loved us—
We know that neither death nor life,
Nor angels, rulers, powers,
Nor present things, nor things to come,
Nor even height, nor depth,
Nor any other creature-thing,
Above, below, around,
Can part us from the love of God,
In Jesus Christ our Lord."

We have the concurrent testimony of antiquity that Paul suffered martyrdom during the Neronian perse-

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cution, and most probably in A.D. 67. As a Roman citizen, he was beheaded in place of being scourged and crucified, or exposed to the frightful tortures then invented for the Christians. Like his Master he suffered "without the gate." There is a spot on the Ostian Road, about two miles beyond the city walls, where it is supposed his martyrdom took place. There the last act of human cruelty was executed, and the great apostle was "*Absent from the body, and present with the Lord.*" His fervent and happy spirit was released from his feeble and suffering body; and the long cherished desire of his heart was fulfilled—"*To depart and to be* WITH CHRIST; *which is* FAR BETTER."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF PAUL'S LIFE.

ABOUT A.D.	
36	Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Acts ix.
36—39	At Damascus—preaches in the synagogue—goes into Arabia—returns to Damascus—flight from Damascus.
	His FIRST visit to Jerusalem; three years after his conversion. Thence to Tarsus. Acts ix. 23–26. Galatians i. 18.
39, 40	Rest of the Jewish churches. Acts ix. 31.
40—43	Paul preaches the gospel in Syria and Cilicia. Galatians i. 21.
	A period of uncertain length. During this time he probably undergoes the chief part of the perils and sufferings which he recounts to the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians xi.
	He is brought from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas; and stays there a year before the famine. Acts xi. 26.

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44 — Paul's SECOND visit to Jerusalem, with the collection. Acts xi. 80.

45 — Paul returns to Antioch. Acts xii. 2–5.

46—49 — Paul's FIRST missionary journey with Barnabas—goes to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and back through the same places to Antioch.
They remain a long time in Antioch.
Dissension and disputation about circumcision. Acts xiii., xiv., xv. 1, 2.

50 — Paul's THIRD visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas, fourteen years after his conversion. Galatians ii. 1.
They attend the council at Jerusalem. Acts xv.
Return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with Judas and Silas. Acts xv. 82–85.

51 — Paul's SECOND missionary journey with Silas and Timothy. He goes from Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas. Luke joins the apostolic band. Acts xvi. 10.

52 — Entrance of the gospel into Europe. Acts xvi. 11–18.
Paul visits Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth. Spends a year and six months at Corinth. Acts xviii. 11.
First Epistle to the Thessalonians written.

53 — Second Epistle to the Thessalonians written.
Paul leaves Corinth and sails to Ephesus. Acts xviii. 18, 19.

54 — Paul's FOURTH visit to Jerusalem at the feast.
Returns to Antioch.

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54—56 Paul's THIRD missionary journey.
He departs from Antioch—visits Galatia, Phrygia, and reaches Ephesus, where he stays two years and three months. Here Paul separates the disciples from the Jewish synagogue. Acts xix. 8, 10.
Epistle to the Galatians written.

57 *(Spring.)* First Epistle to the Corinthians written.
The tumult at Ephesus—Paul leaves for Macedonia. Acts xix. 23—xx. 1.
(Autumn.) Second Epistle to the Corinthians written. 2 Corinthians i. 8; ii. 18, 14; vii. 5; viii. 1; ix. 1.
Paul visits Illyricum—goes to Corinth—winters there. Romans xv. 19; 1 Corinthians xvi. 6.

58 *(Spring.)* The Epistle to the Romans written. Romans xv. 25–28; xvi. 21–23. Acts xx. 4.
Paul leaves Corinth—passes through Macedonia—sails from Philippi—preaches at Troas—addresses the elders at Miletus—visits Tyre and Cæsarea. Acts xx., xxi. 1–14.

58—60 Paul's FIFTH visit to Jerusalem before Pentecost.
He is arrested in the temple—brought before Ananias and the Sanhedrim—sent by Lysias to Cæsarea, where he is kept in bonds two years.

60 Paul heard by Felix and Festus. He appeals unto Cæsar—preaches before Agrippa, Bernice, and the men of Cæsarea.
(Autumn.) Paul sails for Italy.
(Winter.) Shipwrecked at Malta. Acts xxvii.

61 *(Spring.)* Arrives at Rome—dwells two years in his own hired house.

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62 { *(Spring.)* Epistles to Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians written.
(Autumn.) Epistle to the Philippians written.

68 { *(Spring.)* Paul acquitted and released.
Epistle to the Hebrews written.
Paul takes another journey, intending to visit Asia Minor and Greece. Philemon 22; Phil. ii. 24.

64 { Visits Crete and leaves Titus there—exhorts Timothy to abide at Ephesus.
First Epistle to Timothy written.
Epistle to Titus written.

64—67 { Intends to winter at Nicopolis. Titus iii. 12.
Visits Troas, Corinth, Miletum. 2 Timothy xiii. 20.
Paul arrested and sent to Rome.
Deserted and solitary—having only Luke, of his old associates, with him.
Second Epistle to Timothy written, probably not long before his death. These journeys and events are generally supposed to cover a period of about three years.

67 Paul's martyrdom.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE BURNING OF ROME.

As our two great apostles PETER and PAUL suffered martyrdom during the FIRST imperial persecution, it may be interesting to many of our readers to know something of the particulars which led to this cruel edict.

But here, however reluctantly, we must turn from the sure word of God to the uncertain writings of men. We pass, just at this point, from the firm and solid ground of inspiration to the insecure footing of Roman historians and ecclesiastical history. Nevertheless, *all* historians, both ancient and modern, pagan and christian, are agreed as to the main facts of the burning of Rome, and the persecution of the Christians.

In the month of July A.D. 64, a great fire broke out in the Circus, which continued to spread until it laid in ruins all the ancient grandeur of the imperial city. The flames extended with great rapidity, and Rome being a city of long narrow streets, and of hills and valleys, the fire gathered force from the winds, and soon became a general conflagration. In a short time the whole city seemed wrapped in one sheet of burning flame.

TACITUS, a Roman historian of that day, and considered one of the most accurate of his time, tells us:—"Of the fourteen quarters into which Rome was divided four only were left entire, three were reduced to ashes, and the remaining seven presented nothing better than

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a heap of shattered houses half in ruins." The fire raged furiously for six days and seven nights. Palaces, temples, monuments, the mansions of the rich, and the dwellings of the poor, perished in this fatal fire. But these were nothing compared with the sufferings of the inhabitants. The infirmities of age, the weakness of the young, the helplessness of the sick, the wild screams and lamentations of women, added to the miseries of this dreadful scene. Some endeavoured to provide for themselves, others to save their friends, but no place of safety could be found. Which way to turn, or what way to go, no one could tell; the fire raged on every side, so that numbers fell prostrate in the street, embraced a voluntary death, and perished in the flames.

The important question, as to how the fire originated, was now discussed everywhere. That the city was set on fire by incendiaries, and by the orders of Nero himself, nearly all believed. It was certain that a number of men were seen extending instead of extinguishing the flames; and they boldly affirmed that they had authority for doing so. It was also generally reported that while Rome was in a blaze, the inhuman monster Nero stood on a tower where he could watch its progress, and amused himself by singing the fall of Troy to his favourite guitar.

Many of our readers will no doubt wonder what object he could have in burning down the greater part of Rome? His object we believe was that he might rebuild the city on a scale of greater magnificence, and call it by his own name. And this he attempted immediately in the grandest way. But everything he did failed to restore him to popular favour, or remove the infamous charge of having set the city on fire. And when all hope was gone of propitiating either the people or the gods, he fell upon

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the plan of shifting the imputation from himself to others. He knew enough of the unpopularity of the Christians both with the Jews and the heathen, to fix on them as his sin-bearers. A rumour was soon spread that the incendiaries had been discovered, and that the Christians were the criminals. Numbers were immediately arrested, that they might be brought to condign punishment, and satisfy the popular indignation. And now we arrive at

THE FIRST PERSECUTION UNDER THE EMPERORS.

But here we may pause for a moment, and contemplate the progress of Christianity, and the state of the church in Rome at this time. At a very early period, and without the aid of any apostle, Christianity had found its way to Rome. It was, no doubt, first carried thither by some who had been converted under Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost. Amongst his hearers we have expressly mentioned, "Strangers of Rome, Jews, and proselytes." And Paul, in his Epistle to that church, thanks God that their "faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." And in his salutations he speaks of "Andronicus and Junia," his kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, who were chief men among the apostles, and whose conversion was of an earlier date than his own. But great wonders had been wrought by the gospel in the course of thirty years. Christians had become a marked, a separate, a peculiar people. They were now known as perfectly distinct from the Jews, and bitterly disclaimed by them.

The labours of Paul and his companions, during the two years of his imprisonment, were no doubt blessed of the Lord to the conversion of great numbers. So that

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the Christians were by this time no secret or inconsiderable community, but were known to embrace in their numbers both Jews and Gentiles of all ranks and conditions, from the imperial household to the runaway slave. But their present suffering, as we have seen, was not for their Christianity. They were really sacrificed by Nero to appease the popular fury of the people, and to reconcile their offended deities.

This was the first *legal* persecution of the Christians; and in some of its features it stands alone in the annals of human barbarity. Inventive cruelty sought out new ways of torture to satiate the blood-thirsty Nero—the most cruel Emperor that ever reigned. The gentle, peaceful, unoffending followers of the Lord Jesus were sewn in the skins of wild beasts, and torn by dogs; others were wrapped in a kind of dress smeared with wax, with pitch, and other combustible matter, with a stake under the chin to keep them upright, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve as lights in the public gardens of popular amusements. Nero lent his own gardens for these exhibitions, and gave entertainments for the people. He took an active part in the games himself; sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the awful spectacle from his chariot. But, accustomed as these people were to public executions and gladiatorial shows, they were moved to pity by the unexampled cruelties inflicted on the Christians. They began to see that they suffered, not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of one man. But fearful as their death was, it was soon over; and to them, no doubt, the happiest moment of their existence. Long, long before the lights were quenched in Nero's garden, the martyrs had found their home and

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rest above—in the blooming garden of God's eternal delights. This precious truth we learn from what the Saviour said to the penitent thief on the cross—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke xxiii.

Although historians are not agreed either as to the extent or the duration of this terrible persecution, there is too good reason to believe that it spread throughout the empire, and lasted till the end of the tyrant's life. He died by his own hand in utter wretchedness and despair, in A.D. 68, about four years after the burning of Rome, and one year after the martyrdom of PETER and PAUL. Towards the end of his reign, the Christians were required, under the heaviest penalties, even that of death, to offer sacrifices to the emperor and to the heathen gods. While such edicts were in force the persecution must have continued.

After the death of Nero the persecution ceased, and the followers of Jesus enjoyed comparative peace until the reign of Domitian, an emperor little behind Nero in wickedness. But meanwhile we must turn aside for a moment, and notice the accomplishment of the Lord's most solemn warnings, in

THE DOWNFALL OF JERUSALEM.

A.D. 70.

The dispersion of the Jews, and the total destruction of their city and temple, are the next events of consideration in the remainder of the first century, though, strictly speaking, that fearful catastrophe is no part of church history; it belongs to the history of the Jews. But as it was a literal fulfilment of the Saviour's prophecy, and immediately affected those who were Christians, it deserves a place in our history.

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The disciples, before the death and resurrection of Christ, were strongly Jewish in all their thoughts and associations. They connected the Messiah and the temple together. Their thought was that He should deliver them from the power of the Romans, and that all the prophecies about the land, the tribes, the city and temple would be accomplished. But Israel rejected the Messiah Himself, and, consequently, all their own hopes and promises in Him. Most significant and weighty are the opening words of Matthew xxiv., "And Jesus went out and departed from the temple." It was now empty indeed, in the sight of God. All that gave it value to Him was gone. "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate." It was now ripe for destruction.

"And his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple." They were still occupied with the outward greatness and glory of these things. "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, *There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*" These words were literally accomplished by the Romans about forty years after they were spoken, and in the very way that the Lord predicted. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke xix. 43, 44.

After the Romans had experienced many disappointments and defeats in attempting to make a breach in the walls, through the desperate resistance of the insurgent Jews, even until little hope was left of taking the city,

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Titus summoned a council of war. Three plans were discussed: to storm the city immediately; to repair the works and rebuild the engines; or to blockade and starve the city to surrender. The last was preferred, and the whole army was set to work "to cast a trench" around the city. But the siege was long and difficult. It lasted from the spring till September. And during all that time, the most unexampled miseries of every kind were experienced by the besieged. But at last the end came, when both the city and the temple were in the hands of the Romans. Titus was anxious to save the magnificent temple and its treasures. But, contrary to his orders, a soldier, mounting on the shoulders of one of his comrades, threw a blazing brand into a small gilded door in the outer building or porch. The flames sprang up at once. Titus, observing this, rushed to the spot with the utmost speed; he shouted, he made signs to his soldiers to quench the fire; but his voice was drowned, and his signs unnoticed in the fearful confusion. The splendour of the interior filled him with wonder. And as the flames had not yet reached the most holy place, he made a last effort to save it, and exhorted the soldiers to stay the conflagration; but it was too late. Blazing brands were flying in all directions, and the fierce excitement of battle, with the insatiable hope of plunder, had reached its highest pitch. Titus little knew that a greater than he had said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The word of the Lord, not the commands of Titus, must be obeyed. The whole was thoroughly levelled, and razed to the foundations, according to the word of the Lord.

For nearly every particular of this terrible siege, we are indebted to Josephus, who was in the Roman camp, and

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near the person of Titus at the time. He acted as interpreter when terms were talked of between Titus and the insurgents. The walls and bulwarks of Zion seemed impregnable to the Roman, and he felt most anxious to come to terms of peace; but the Jews rejected every proposal, and the Romans at length triumphed. On entering the city, Josephus tells us, Titus was struck with wonder at its strength; indeed when he contemplated the solid altitude of the towers, the magnitude of the several stones, and the accuracy of their joinings, and saw how great was their breadth, how vast their height, "Surely," he exclaimed, "we fought with God on our side; and God it was who brought the Jews down from these bulwarks; for what could human hands or engines avail against these towers?" Such were the confessions of the heathen general. It certainly was the most terrible siege that the whole history of the world records.

The accounts given by Josephus of the sufferings of the Jews during the siege are too awful to be transferred to our pages. The numbers that perished under Vespasian in the country, and under Titus in the city, from A.D. 67–70, by famine, internal factions, and the Roman sword, were one million three hundred and fifty thousand four hundred and sixty, besides one hundred thousand sold into slavery.* Such, alas! alas! were the awful consequences of disbelieving and disregarding the solemn, earnest, and affectionate entreaties of their own Messiah. Need we wonder at the Redeemer's tears, shed over the infatuated city? And need we wonder at the preacher's tears now, as he appeals to infatuated sinners, in view of

* See Dean Milman's *History of the Jews*, vol. ii., book xvi., page 380.

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coming and eternal judgments? Surely the wonder is that so few tears are shed over thoughtless, careless, perishing sinners. Oh, for hearts to feel as the Saviour felt, and eyes to weep like His!

The Christians, with whom we have more especially to do, remembering the Lord's warning, left Jerusalem in a body before the siege was formed. They journeyed to Pella, a village beyond the Jordan, where they remained till Hadrian permitted them to return to the ruins of their ancient city. And this brings us to THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

During the milder reigns of Vespasian and his son Titus, the number of Christians must have increased exceedingly. This we learn, not from any direct account that we have of their prosperity, but from incidental circumstances that prove it, and which we shall meet with immediately.

THE CRUEL REIGN OF DOMITIAN.

DOMITIAN, the younger brother of Titus, ascended the throne in A.D. 81. But he was of a totally different temper to his father and brother. *They* tolerated the Christians, *he* persecuted them. His character was cowardly, suspicious, and cruel. He raised a persecution against the Christians, because of some vague and superstitious fear that he entertained, of the appearance of a person born in Judea of the family of David, who was to obtain the empire of the world.* But neither did he spare Romans of the most illustrious birth and station who had embraced Christianity. Some were martyred on the spot, others were banished to be mar-

* See page 115.

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tyred in their exile. His own niece, Domitilla, who had been given in marriage to Flavius Clemens, his cousin, were the victims of his cruelty for having embraced the gospel of Christ. Thus we see, that Christianity, by the power of God, in spite of armies and emperors, fire and sword, was spreading, not only amongst the middle and lower, but also amongst the higher classes.

"Domitian," says Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history, "having exercised his cruelty against many, and unjustly slain no small number of noble and illustrious men at Rome, and having, without cause, punished vast numbers of honourable men with exile and the confiscation of their property, at length established himself as the successor of Nero, in his hatred and hostility to God." He also followed Nero in deifying himself. He commanded his own statue to be worshipped as a god, revived the law of treason, and put in fearful force its terrible provisions: under these circumstances, surrounded as he was with spies and informers, what must this *second* persecution of the Christians have been!*

But the end of this weak, vain, and despicable tyrant drew near. He was in the habit of writing on a roll the names of those persons whom he designed to put to death, and kept it carefully in his own possession. And in order to throw such off their guard, he treated them with the most flattering attention. But this fatal roll was one day taken from under a cushion on which he was reclining asleep, by a child who was playing in the apartment, and who carried it to the Empress. She was struck with astonishment and alarm at finding her own

* See Roman History, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xix. page 406.

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name on the dark list, together with the names of others apparently high in his favour. To such the Empress communicated the knowledge of their danger, and notwithstanding all the precaution that cowardice and cunning could suggest, he was despatched by two officers of his own household.

THE SHORT BUT PEACEFUL REIGN OF NERVA.

On the very day of Domitian's death, Nerva was chosen by the Senate to be Emperor, September 18th, A.D. 96. He was a man of blameless reputation. The character of his reign was most favourable to the peace and prosperity of the church of God. The Christians who had been banished by Domitian were recalled, and recovered their confiscated property. The Apostle John returned from his banishment in the isle of Patmos, and resumed his place of service among the churches in Asia. He survived till the reign of Trajan, when at the advanced age of about 100 years, he fell asleep in Jesus.

Nerva commenced his reign by redressing grievances, repealing iniquitous statutes, enacting good laws, and dispensing favours with great liberality. But feeling unequal to the duties of his position, he adopted Trajan as his colleague and successor to the empire. He died in 98.

THE CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE REIGN OF TRAJAN.

A.D. 98–117.

As the outward history of the church was then affected by the will of one man, it will therefore be necessary to notice, however briefly, the disposition, or ruling passion

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of the reigning prince. Thus it was that the condition of the Christians everywhere depended entirely on him who was master of the Roman world, and in a certain sense of the whole world.

Trajan was an emperor of great renown. Perhaps none more so ever sat on the throne of the Cæsars. The Roman *earth* or world, it is said, reached its widest limits by his victories. He caused the terror of the Roman arms and the Roman discipline to be felt on the frontiers as none before him had done. He was thus a great general and a military sovereign; and being possessed of a large and vigorous mind, he was an able ruler, and Rome flourished under his sway. But in the history of the church his character appears in a less favourable light. He had a confirmed prejudice against Christianity, and sanctioned the persecution of Christians. Some say he meditated the extinction of the name. This is the deepest stain which rests on the memory of Trajan.

But Christianity, in spite of Roman emperors, Roman prisons, and Roman executions, pursued its silent, steady course. In little more than seventy years after the death of Christ, it had made such rapid progress in some places as to threaten the downfall of paganism. The heathen temples were deserted, the worship of the gods was neglected, and victims for sacrifices were rarely purchased. This naturally raised a popular cry against Christianity, such as we had at Ephesus. "This our craft is in danger to be set at nought, and the temple of the great goddess Diana to be despised." Those whose livelihood depended on the worship of the heathen deities, laid many and grievous complaints against the Christians before the governors. This was especially so in the Asiatic provinces where Christianity was most prevalent.

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About the year 110, many Christians were thus brought before the tribunal of Pliny the younger, the governor of Bithynia and Pontus. But Pliny being naturally a wise, candid, and humane man, he took pains to inform himself of the principles and practices of the Christians. And when he found that many of them were put to death who could not be convicted of any public crime, he was greatly embarrassed. He had not taken any part in such matters before, and there was then no settled law on the subject. The edicts of Nero had been repealed by the Senate, and those of Domitian by his successor, Nerva. Under these circumstances, Pliny applied for advice to his master, the Emperor Trajan. The letters which then passed between them, being justly considered as the most valuable record of the history of the church during that period, they deserve a place in our "Short Papers." But we can only transcribe a portion of Pliny's celebrated epistle, and chiefly those parts which refer to the character of Christians, and the extension of Christianity.

C. PLINY TO TRAJAN EMPEROR.

"Health.—It is my usual custom, sir, to refer all things, of which I harbour any doubt, to you. For who can better direct my judgment in its hesitation, or instruct my understanding in its ignorance? I never had the fortune to be present at any examination of Christians before I came into this province. I am therefore at a loss to determine what is the usual object either of inquiry or of punishment, and to what length either of them is to be carried. . . . . In the meantime this has been my method with respect to those who were brought before me as Christians. I asked them whether

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they were Christians ; if they pleaded guilty, I interrogated them—a second and a third time—with a menace of capital punishment. In case of obstinate perseverance, I ordered them to be executed . . . . An anonymous 'Libel' was published, containing the names of many who denied that they were, or had been, Christians, and invoked the gods, as I prescribed, and prayed to your image, with incense and wine, and moreover reviled Christ—none of which things I am told a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. So I thought proper to dismiss them. . . . . The whole of the crime or error of the Christians lay in this—they were accustomed on a certain day to meet before daylight, and to sing among themselves a hymn to Christ, as a god ; and to bind themselves by an oath, not to commit any wickedness ; not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery ; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a harmless meal, of which they partook in common without any disorder ; but this last practice they have ceased to attend to, since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I prohibited assemblies.

"After this account, I judged it the more necessary to examine, and that *by torture*, two females, who were said to be deaconesses, but I have discovered nothing except a bad and excessive superstition. Suspending, therefore, all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice. The number of the accused is so great as to call for serious consultation. Many persons are informed against, of every age and rank, and of both sexes ; and many more will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this

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superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country: nevertheless, it seems to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the *temples which were almost forsaken*, begin to be more frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims likewise are everywhere bought up, whereas for a time there were few purchasers. Whence it is easy to imagine what numbers of them might be reclaimed if pardon were granted to those who repent."

TRAJAN TO PLINY.

"You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry which you have made concerning Christians. For truly no one general rule can be laid down which will apply itself to all cases. These people must not be sought after: if they are brought before you and convicted, let them be capitally punished; yet with this restriction, that if any one renounce Christianity, and evidence his sincerity by supplicating our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, let him on his repentance obtain pardon. But anonymous libels in no case ought to be attended to: for it is a very dangerous precedent, and perfectly incongruous to the maxims of our age."

The clear and unsuspected testimony of these two letters awakens thoughts and feelings of the deepest interest in the Christian's mind of to-day. The First Epistle of St. Peter was addressed to the fathers of these holy sufferers, and possibly to some of themselves then alive; and it is not unlikely that Peter laboured amongst them personally. Thus were they taught and encouraged beforehand, to give to the Roman governor "a reason

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for the hope that was in them with meekness and fear." Indeed the whole of the first Epistle seems divinely fitted to strengthen these unoffending Christians against the unjust and unreasonable course of Pliny. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." Peter contemplates in his epistle the family of faith as on a journey through the wilderness, and God as the supreme Governor ruling over all—believers and unbelievers. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." With such a scene before us, and such witnesses, making allowance for the position of Trajan and Pliny as heathen statesmen, it may be well to inquire at this early stage of our history, What was and is

THE REAL CAUSE OF PERSECUTION

Although different reasons may be given by different persons and governments for persecuting Christians, yet we believe that the real cause is the heart's enmity against Christ and His truth, as seen in the godly lives of His people. Besides, their light makes manifest the darkness around, and exposes and reproves the inconsistencies of false professors, and the godless lives of the wicked. The enemy, taking occasion by these things, stirs up the cruel passions of those in power to quench the light by persecuting the light-bearer. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light." Such has been the experience of all Christians, in all ages, both in times of peace and in times of trouble. There is no exemption from persecution, secretly or openly, if we live according to the Spirit and truth of Christ. Amongst the last words that

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the great apostle wrote, were these: "Yea, and *all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy iii. 12.

These divine truths, given for the instruction and guidance of the church in all ages, were strikingly illustrated in the cases of Pliny and the Christians of Bithynia. He is spoken of by all historians as one of the most enlightened, virtuous, and accomplished men of antiquity. He was also possessed of great wealth, and he had the reputation of being most liberal and benevolent in private life. Why then, it may be asked, as a Roman statesman and governor, did he become such a persecutor of the Christians? This question he answers in his own letter. It was simply for their faith in Christ; nothing else. It had been proved to him both by friends and foes, that the Christians were guilty of no crime either morally, socially, or politically. Having thrice asked the question, "*Are you Christians?*" if they steadfastly affirmed that they were, he condemned them to death. The only pretext which he gave to cover the injustice of his conduct as a governor, was the fact that the Christians were obstinate professors of a religion not established by the laws of the empire.

Many, from private malice and other reasons, were at this time *anonymously* accused of being Christians, who were not really so. These were tested by being called upon to deny the faith, offer incense to the gods, worship the image of the emperor, and revile Christ. All who complied with these terms were dismissed. *But none of which things*, Pliny is made to witness, *those who are true Christians can ever be compelled to do.* He next had recourse to the brutal custom of examining innocent persons by torture. Two females, noted servants of the

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church, were thus examined. But, instead of the expected disclosures as to the rumoured seditious and licentious character of their meetings, nothing unfavourable to the christian community could be tortured out of them. The governor could detect nothing by every means he tried, except what he calls "a perverse and extravagant superstition."

It must also be borne in mind, both to the credit and also to the deeper guilt of Pliny, that he did not proceed against the Christians from mere popular prejudice—unlike his friend Tacitus, who allowed himself to be carried away by prevailing rumours, and without further inquiry, to write against Christianity in the most unreasonable and disgraceful manner. But Pliny considered it his duty to enter into a careful investigation of the whole matter before giving his judgment. How then can we account for such a man, apparently desirous of acting impartially, persecuting to death a blameless people? To answer this question, we must enquire into the outward, or ostensible causes of persecution.

THE OSTENSIBLE CAUSES OF PERSECUTION.

The Romans professed to tolerate all religions, from which the commonwealth had nothing to fear. This was their boasted liberality. Even the Jews were allowed to live according to their own laws. What was it then, we may well ask, that could have caused all their severity to the Christians? Had the commonwealth anything to fear from them? Had it anything to fear from those whose lives were blameless, whose doctrines were the pure truth of heaven, and whose religion was conducive to the people's welfare, both publicly and privately?

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The following may be considered as one of the unavoidable causes of persecution, looking at both sides of the question:

1. Christianity, unlike all other religions that preceded it, was *aggressive* in its character. Judaism was exclusive; the religion of one nation. Christianity was proclaimed as the religion of mankind or the whole world. This was an entirely new thing on the earth. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the Lord's command to the disciples. They were to go forth and make war with error, in every form and in all its workings. The conquest to be made was the heart for Christ. "The weapons of our warfare," says the apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.) In this war of aggression with existing institutions, and with the corrupt habits of the heathen, the disciples of Jesus had little to expect but resistance, persecution, and suffering.

2. The pagan religion, which Christianity was rapidly undermining and destined to overthrow, was an institution of the State. It was so closely interwoven with the entire civil and social systems, that to attack the religion was to be brought into conflict with both the civil and the social. And this was exactly what took place. Had the primitive church been as accommodating to the world as Christendom is now, much persecution might have been avoided. But the time had not come for such lax accommodation. The gospel which the Christians then preached, and

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the purity of doctrine and life which they maintained, shook to the very foundation the old anddeeply rooted religion of the State.

3. The Christians naturally withdrew themselves from the pagans. They became a separate and distinct people. They could not but condemn and abhor *polytheism*, as utterly opposed to the one living and true God, and to the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ. This gave the Romans the idea that Christians were unfriendly to the human race, seeing they condemned all religions but their own. Hence they were called "Atheists," because they did not believe in the heathen deities, and derided the heathen worship.

4. Simplicity and humility characterized the Christians' worship. They peaceably came together before sunrise or after sunset, to avoid giving offence. They sang hymns to Christ as to God; they broke bread in remembrance of His love in dying for them; they edified one another and pledged themselves to a life of holiness. But they had no fine temples, no statues, no order of priests, and no victims to offer in sacrifice. The contrast between their worship and that of all others in the empire became most manifest. The heathen, in their ignorance, concluded that the Christians had no religion at all, and that their secret meetings were for the worst of purposes. The world *now*, as *then*, would say of those who worship God in spirit and in truth, that "these people have no religion at all." Christian worship, in true simplicity, without the aid of temples and priests, rites and ceremonies, is not much better understood now by professing Christendom, than it was then by pagan Rome. Still, it is true, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24.

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5. By the progress of Christianity, the temporal interests of a great number of persons were seriously affected. This was a fruitful and bitter source of persecution. A countless throng of priests, image makers, dealers, soothsayers, augurs, and artisans, found good livings in connection with the worship of so many deities.

6. All these, seeing their craft in danger, rose up in united strength against the Christians, and sought by every means to arrest the progress of Christianity. They invented and disseminated the vilest calumnies against everything christian. The cunning priests and the artful soothsayers easily persuaded the vulgar, and the public mind in general, that all the calamities, wars, tempests, and diseases that afflicted mankind, were sent upon them by the angry gods, because the Christians who despised their authority were everywhere tolerated.*

Many other things might be mentioned, but these were everywhere the daily causes of the Christians' sufferings, both publicly and privately. Of the truth of this, a moment's reflection will convince every reader. But faith could see the Lord's hand and hear His voice in it all: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. . . . . Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matthew x.

Having said this much as to the great opposition which

* See Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i., page 67. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*; early chapters.

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the early church had to contend against, it will be necessary to glance for a moment at the real cause or causes and means of

THE RAPID PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Doubtless the causes and the means were divine. They proved themselves to be so. The Spirit of God, who descended in power on the day of Pentecost, and who had taken up His abode in the church and in the individual Christian, is the true source of all success in preaching the gospel, in the conversion of souls, and in bearing testimony against evil. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Besides, the Lord has promised to be with His people at all times. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Zech. iv. 6, 7; Matt. xxviii. 18–20.) But our object at present is to look at things historically, and not merely according to the assurance of faith.

1. One great cause of the rapid spread of Christianity is its perfect adaptation to man in every age, in every country, and in every condition. It addresses all as *lost*, and supposes a like want in all. Thus it suits the Jew and the Gentile, the king and the subject, the priest and the people, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the learned and the ignorant, the moral and the profligate. It is God's religion for the *heart*, and asserts His sovereignty there, and His only. It announces itself as the "Power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It proposes to raise man from the deepest depths of degradation to the loftiest heights of eternal glory. Who can estimate, in spite of every prejudice, the effect of the proclamation of such a gospel to miserable and benighted heathens? Thousands, mil-

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lions, tired of a worthless and worn out religion, responded to its heavenly voice, gathered around the name of Jesus, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and were ready to suffer for His sake. Love ruled in the new religion, hatred in the old.

2. Its sanction and maintenance of all earthly relations, according to God, were other reasons for the acceptance of the gospel among the heathen. Each one was exhorted to remain in these relationships, and seek to glorify God therein. The blessings of Christianity to wives, children, and servants, are unspeakable. Their love, happiness, and comfort were an astonishment to the heathen, and a new thing amongst them. Yet all was natural and orderly. A Christian, who is said to have lived about this time—the early part of the second century—thus describes his contemporaries: "The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves, they do not use a different language, or affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks, and of the barbarians, each as his lot has been cast: and while they conform to the usages of the country, in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet shew a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They obey the existing laws, and conquer the laws by their own living."*

3. The blameless lives of the Christians; the divine purity of their doctrines; their patient, cheerful endurance of sufferings worse than death, as well as death itself; their disregard for all the objects of ordinary ambition; their boldness in the faith at the risk of life,

* Neander's *Church History*, vol. i., p. 95.

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credit and property—were chief means in the rapid spread of Christianity. "For who," says Tertullian, "that beholds these things, is not impelled to inquire into the cause? And who, when he has inquired, does not embrace Christianity; and when he has embraced it, does not himself wish to suffer for it?"

These few particulars will enable the reader to form a more definite judgment as to what it was that tended on the one hand to hinder, and on the other to further the progress of the gospel of Christ. Nothing can be more interesting to the christian mind than the study of this great and glorious work. The Lord's workmen, for the most part, were plain unlettered men; they were poor, friendless, and destitute of all human aid; and yet, in a short time, they persuaded a great part of mankind to abandon the religion of their ancestors, and to embrace a new religion which is opposed to the natural dispositions of men, the pleasures of the world, and the established customs of ages. Who could question the *inward power* of Christianity with such *outward facts* before them? Surely it was the Spirit of God who clothed with power the words of these early preachers! Surely their force on the minds of men was divine! A complete change was produced: they were born again—created anew in Christ Jesus.

In less than a hundred years from the day of Pentecost, the gospel had penetrated into most of the provinces of the Roman empire, and was widely diffused in many of them. In our brief outline of the life of St. Paul, and in the chronological table of his missions, we have traced the first planting of many churches, and the propagation of the truth in many quarters. In large central cities, such as Antioch in Syria, Ephesus in Asia, and Corinth

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in Greece, we have seen Christianity well established, and spreading its rich blessings among the surrounding towns and villages.

We also learn from ecclesiastical antiquity, that what these cities were to Syria, Asia, and Greece, Carthage was to Africa. When Scapula, the president of Carthage, threatened the Christians with severe and cruel treatment, Tertullian, in one of his pointed appeals, bids him bethink himself. "What wilt thou do," he says, "with so many thousands of men and women of every age and dignity, as will freely offer themselves? What fires, what swords, wilt thou stand in need of! What is Carthage itself likely to suffer if decimated by thee: when every one there shall find his near kindred and neighbours, and shall see there matrons, and men perhaps of thy own rank and order, and the most principal persons, and either the kindred or friends of those who are thy nearest friends? Spare then, therefore, for your sake, if not for ours."*

We now resume the narrative of events, and the next in order to be related, is

THE MARTYRDOM OF IGNATIUS.

There is no fact in early church history more sacredly preserved than the martyrdom of Ignatius the bishop of Antioch; and there is no narrative more celebrated than his journey, as a prisoner in chains, from Antioch to Rome.

According to the general opinion of historians, the Emperor Trajan, when on his way to the Parthian war, in the year 107, visited Antioch. From what cause it

* Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, p. 20.

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is difficult to say, but it appears that the Christians were threatened with persecution by his orders. Ignatius, therefore, being concerned for the church in Antioch, desired to be introduced to Trajan's presence. His great object was to prevent, if possible, the threatened persecution. With this end in view, he set forth to the Emperor the true character and condition of the Christians, and offered himself to suffer in their stead.

The details of this remarkable interview are given in many church histories, but there is such an air of suspicion about them, that we forbear inserting them; it ended, however, in the condemnation of Ignatius. He was sentenced by the Emperor to be carried to Rome, and thrown to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the people. He welcomed the severe sentence, and gladly submitted to be bound, believing it was for his faith in Christ and as a sacrifice for the saints.

Ignatius was now committed to the charge of ten soldiers, who appear to have disregarded his age and to have treated him with great harshness. He had been bishop of Antioch for nearly forty years, and so must have been an old man. But they hurried him over a long journey, both by sea and land, in order to reach Rome before the games were ended. He arrived on the last day of the festival, and was carried at once to the amphitheatre, where he suffered according to his sentence, in the sight of the assembled spectators. And thus the weary pilgrim found rest from the fatigues of his long journey in the blessed repose of the paradise of God.

It has been asked, Why was Ignatius taken all the way from Antioch to Rome to suffer martyrdom? The

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answer can only be conjecture. It may have been with the intention of striking fear into other Christians, by the spectacle of one so eminent, and so well-known, brought in chains to a dreadful and degrading death. But if this was the Emperor's expectation he was entirely disappointed. It had just the opposite effect. The report of his sentence and of his intended route spread far and wide, and deputations from the surrounding churches were sent to meet him at convenient points. He was thus cheered and greeted with the warmest congratulations of his brethren; and they, in return, were delighted to see the venerable bishop, and receive his parting blessing. Many of the saints would thereby be encouraged to brave, if not to desire, a martyr's death and a martyr's crown. Among the number who met him by the way was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who, like Ignatius, had been a disciple of St. John, and was destined to be a martyr for the gospel. But besides these personal interviews, he is said to have written séven letters on this journey, which have been preserved in the providence of God and handed down to us. Great interest has ever been, and still is, attached to these letters.

THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS AND SCRIPTURE.

But however worthy of all honour Ignatius may be as a holy man of God, and as a noble martyr for Christ, we must ever remember that his letters are not the word of God. They may interest and instruct us, but they cannot command our faith. That can only stand on the solid ground of the word of God, never on the infirm ground of tradition. "Scripture stands alone," as one has said, "in majestic isolation, pre-eminent in instruction, and separated by unapproachable excellence from

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everything written by the apostolic fathers: so that those who follow close to the apostles have left us writings which are more for our warning than our edification." At the same time, these early christian writers have every claim to our respect and veneration with which antiquity can invest them. They were the contemporaries of the apostles, they enjoyed the privilege of hearing their instruction, they shared with them the labours of the gospel, and freely conversed with them from day to day. Paul speaks of a Clement—a so-called apostolic Father—as his "fellow-labourer, whose name is in the book of life." And what he says of Timothy may have been at least partly true of many others: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions." Philippians iv. 3; 2 Timothy iii. 10, 11.

From those who were so highly privileged, we should naturally expect sound apostolic doctrine—a faithful repetition of the truths and instructions which were delivered to them by the inspired apostles. But such alas! is not the case. Ignatius was one of the earliest of the apostolic Fathers. He became bishop of Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, about the year 70. He was a disciple of the apostle John, and survived him only about seven years. Surely from such a one we might have expected a close resemblance to the apostle's teaching; but it is not so. The definite and absolute statements of scripture, as coming direct from God to the soul, are widely different to the writings of Ignatius and of all the Fathers. Our only safe and sure guide is the word of God. How seasonable then is that word in the First Epistle of John, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye

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have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." (1 John ii. 24.) This passage evidently refers more especially to the *person* of Christ, and consequently to the scriptures of the New Testament, in which we have the display of the Father in the Son, and made known to us by the Holy Spirit. In Paul's Epistles, we have more fully revealed the counsels of God concerning the *church*, *Israel*, and *the Gentiles*, so that we must go farther back than "*the Fathers*" to find a true ground of faith; we must go back to that which existed from "THE BEGINNING." Nothing has direct divine authority for the believer, but that which was from "the beginning." This alone secures our continuing "in the Son and in the Father."

The Epistles of Ignatius have been long esteemed by Episcopalians as the chief authority for the system of the English church—and this must be our excuse for referring so fully to this "Father." Nearly all their arguments in favour of episcopacy are founded on his letters. So strongly does he press submission to the episcopal authority, and so highly does he extol it, that some have been induced to question their genuineness altogether, and others have supposed that they must have been largely interpolated to serve the prelatical interest. But with the controversy on these points we have nothing to do in our "Short Papers."*

We will now resume our history from the death of Trajan in the year 117, and briefly glance at the condition of the church during

* See *The Genuine Epistles of Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Barnabas*, by Ab. Wake, 6th ed. Bagster.

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THE REIGNS OF HADRIAN AND THE ANTONINES. FROM A.D. 117 TO 180.

Although it would be unjust to class Hadrian and the first Antonine with the systematic persecutors of the church, nevertheless, Christians were often exposed to the most violent sufferings and death during their dominion. The cruel custom of ascribing all public calamities to the Christians, and of calling for their blood as an atonement to the offended deities, still continued, and was generally yielded to by the local governors, and unchecked by the indifferent emperors. But under the reign of the second Antonine, Marcus Aurelius, the evil spirit of persecution greatly increased. It was no longer confined to the outbursts of popular fury, but was encouraged by the highest authorities. The slender protection which the ambiguous edicts of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antonius afforded the Christians was withdrawn, and the excited passions of the idolatrous pagans were unrestrained by the government. It is most interesting to the student of scripture history to see how this could take place under the reign of a prince who was distinguished for learning, philosophy, and general mildness of character.

The past sixty years of comparative peace had opened a wide field for the propagation of the gospel. During that period it made rapid progress in many ways. Christian congregations increased in numbers, influence, and wealth throughout every quarter of the Roman dominions. Many of the rich, being filled with divine love, distributed their substance to the poor, travelled into regions which as yet had not heard the sound of the gospel, and, having planted Christianity, passed on to

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other countries. The Holy Spirit could not thus work without awakening the jealousy and stirring up all the enmity of the supporters of the national religion. Aurelius saw with an evil eye the superior power of Christianity over men's minds compared with his own heathen philosophy. He then became an intolerant persecutor, and encouraged the provincial authorities to crush what he considered a contumacious spirit of resistance to his authority. But the gospel of the grace of God was far above and beyond the reach of Aurelius; and neither his sword nor his lions could arrest its triumphant career. In spite of the bloody persecutions which he excited or sanctioned, Christianity was propagated throughout the known world.

But here we must pause for a little, and look around us. There is something deeper far in the change of government towards the church than the merely historical eye can discern. We believe that we are now come to

THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST PERIOD AND THE OPENING OF THE SECOND.

The EPHESIAN condition of the church, looking at it in this light, may be said to have ended with the death of Antoninus Pius, in the year 161; and the Smyrnean condition to have commenced with the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The persecution in Asia broke out with great violence in the year 167, under the new edicts of this emperor; and Smyrna especially suffered greatly: the justly esteemed Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, suffered martyrdom at this time. But in order to prove the view we have taken, it will be necessary to glance briefly at the addresses to the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna. And first,

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THE ADDRESS TO THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS. REVELATION II. 1–7.

The grand object of the church in this world was to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." It was set up to be a light-bearer for God. It is thus symbolized by a "golden candlestick"—a vessel which bears the light. It ought to have been a true witness of what God had manifested in Jesus on the earth; and of what He is now when Christ is in heaven. We further learn from this address, that the church, as a vessel of testimony in this world, is threatened with being set aside unless its first estate is maintained. But, alas! she fails, as the creature always does. The angels, Adam, Israel, and the church, kept not their first estate. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee," saith the Lord, "because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

There was still, however, much that He could praise, and He does praise all that He can. As an assembly, they had patience; they had laboured and not fainted; they could not bear "evil men," or those who were seeking the highest place in the church. Nevertheless, He feels the departure from Himself. "Thou hast left thy first love." He speaks as one disappointed. They had ceased to delight in His love to them, and hence their own love to Him declined. "First love" is the happy fruit of our appreciation of the Lord's love to us." "Outward testimony might go on," as one has said, "but that is not what the Lord most values, though

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value it He does, so far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, and kept pure for Him from the world and its ways. God has called us for this: not only for salvation, and a witness for Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ—a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last, and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ, and He at least has proved the fulness and faithfulness of His love to us. But what of ours!"*

It was this state of things in Ephesus, and in the church at large, that called for the intervention of the Lord in faithful discipline. The church, as planted by Paul, had already fallen from its first estate. "All seek their own," he says, "not the things of Jesus Christ." And again, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Hence the tribulation spoken of in the address to the church in Smyrna. Though the Lord is full of grace and love in all His ways towards His fallen and failing church, still He is righteous withal and must judge evil. He is not seen in these addresses as the Head in heaven of the one body, nor as the Bridegroom of His church; but in His judicial character, walking in the midst of the candlesticks, having the attributes of a judge. See chapter i.

It will be observed by the reader, that there is a measured distance and reserve in the style of His address to the church at Ephesus. This is in keeping with the

* *Lectures on the Revelation*, by W. K.

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place He takes in the midst of the golden candlesticks. He writes to the *angel* of the church, not to "the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus," as in the Epistle by Paul.

There have been many disputes about "who is meant by the angel." He was a person, we believe, so identified morally with the assembly, that he represented it, and characterized it. The Lord addresses the angel, not the church immediately. "The angel," therefore gives the idea of representation. For example, in the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah; the angel of the covenant: and in the New, we have the angels of the little children, and so of Peter in Acts xii. they said, "It is his angel."

We will now briefly glance at

THE ADDRESS TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA. REVELATION II. 8–11.

Our interest in the history of the church is greatly increased when we see that the Lord has distinctly marked its successive epochs. The outward condition of the church down to the death of the first Antonine—so far as it can be ascertained from the most authentic histories—answers in a remarkable way to what we learn from scripture, and especially from the address to Ephesus. There was outward consistency and zeal; they were unwearied. It is also evident that there was charity, purity, devotedness, holy courage, even to the greatest readiness to suffer in every way for the Lord's sake. At the same time it is clear from both scripture and history, that false doctrine was making its way, and that many were manifesting a most unworthy zeal for official pre-eminence in the church. That forgetfulness of self, and

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that care for Christ and His glory, which are the first-fruits of His grace, were gone. Historically, we now come to the Smyrnean period. For the convenience of the reader we will give the address entire.

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Here the Lord meets the declension by sore tribulation. Milder means had not answered the end. This is no uncommon case; though *they* may have thought that some strange thing had happened to them. But all their afflictions were known to the Lord, measured by Him, and ever under His control. "Ye shall have tribulation *ten days*." The period of their sufferings is exactly specified. And He speaks to them as one that had known the depths of tribulation Himself. "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." He had gone through the deepest sorrow, and through death itself—He had died for them and was alive again. They had this blessed One to flee to in all their trials. And as He looks on, and walks in the midst of His suffering ones, He says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Thus He holds in His hand

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the martyr's crown, ready to place it on the head of His faithful overcomer.

We will now turn to our history, and mark its resemblance to the above Epistle.

THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE CHURCH'S HISTORY COMMENCED ABOUT A.D. 167.

The reign of Aurelius is marked, under the providence of God, by many and great public calamities. We see the hand of the Lord in faithful love chastening His own redeemed and beloved people, but His anger was kindled against their enemies. The eastern army, under Verus, returning from the Parthian war, brought with it to Rome the infliction of a pestilential disease which was then raging in Asia, and which soon spread its ravages through almost the whole of the Roman empire: there was also a great inundation of the Tiber, which laid a large part of the city under water, and swept away immense quantities of grain from the fields and public storehouses. These disasters were naturally followed by a famine which consumed great numbers.

Such events could not fail to increase the hostility of the heathen against the Christians. They ascribed all their troubles to the wrath of the gods, which the new religion was supposed to have provoked. Thus it was that the persecution of the Christians in the Roman empire began with the populace. The outcry against them rose up from the people to the governors. "Throw the Christians to the lions!" "Throw the Christians to the lions!" was the general outcry: and the names of the most prominent in the community were demanded with the same uncontrollable hostility. A weak or superstitious magistrate would tremble before the voice of the

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people, and lend himself as the instrument of their will.

But we will now take a nearer view, under the guidance of the various histories that are before us, of the manner of these persecutions and of the behaviour of the Christians under them.

THE PERSECUTION IN ASIA.
A.D. 167.

In Asia Minor the persecution broke out with great violence, such as it had never been before. Christianity was now treated as a direct crime against the State. This changed the face of everything. Contrary to the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of still milder emperors, Hadrian and Antonine, the Christians were to be sought for as common criminals. They were torn from their homes by the violence of the people, and subjected to the severest tortures. If they obstinately refused to sacrifice to the gods, they were condemned. The wild beast, the cross, the stake, and the axe were the cruel forms of death that met the Lord's faithful ones everywhere.

The prudent and dignified Melito, bishop of Sardis, was so moved by these unheard-of barbarities, that he appeared before the emperor as the Christians' advocate. His address throws much light both on the law and on the conduct of the public authorities. It is as follows:—"The race of God's worshippers in this country are persecuted as they never were before, by *new edicts;* for the shameless sycophants, greedy of the possessions of others —since they are furnished by these edicts with an opportunity of so doing—plunder their innocent victims day and night. And let it be right, if it is done by your command, since a just emperor will never resolve on any unjust

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measure; and we will cheerfully bear the honourable lot of such a death. Yet we would submit this single petition, that you would inform yourself respecting the people who excite the contention, and impartially decide whether they deserve punishment and death, or deliverance and peace. But if this resolve, and this new edict—an edict which ought not so to be issued even against hostile barbarians—comes from yourself, we pray you the more not to leave us exposed to such public robbery."*

There is, we fear, no ground to believe that this noble appeal brought any direct relief to the Christians. The character and ways of Aurelius have perplexed the historians. He was a philosopher of the sect of the Stoics; but naturally humane, benevolent, gentle and pious; even childlike in his disposition, some say, from the influence of his mother's training; yet he was an implacable persecutor of the Christians for nearly twenty years. And the perplexity is increased when we look to Asia, for the proconsul at this time was not personally opposed to the Christians. Still he yielded to the popular fury and the demands of the law. But faith sees beyond the emperors, governors, and people; it sees the prince of darkness ruling these wicked men, and the Lord Jesus overruling all. "I know thy works and tribulation. . . . Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer. . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. . . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Aurelius, with all his philosophy, was an utter stranger to the sweetness and power of that name which alone can meet and satisfy the longings of the human heart. All

* Neander's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i., p. 142.

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the speculations and boastings of philosophy have never done this. Hence the enmity of the human heart to the gospel. Self-sufficiency, which leads to pride and self-importance, is the principal part of the Stoic's religion. With these views, there could be no humility, no sense of sin, and no idea of a Saviour. And the more earnest he was in his own religion, the more bitter and vehement would he be against Christianity.

In a circular-letter addressed by the church of Smyrna to other christian churches, we have a detailed account of the sufferings of the faithful unto death. "They made it evident to us all," says the church, "that in the midst of those sufferings they were absent from the body; or rather, that the Lord stood by them and walked in the midst of them; and, staying themselves on the grace of Christ, they bid defiance to the torments of the world." Some, with a strange, momentary enthusiasm, rushed in self-confidence to the tribunal, and declared themselves to be Christians: but when the magistrate pressed them, wrought upon their fears, shewed them the wild beasts, they yielded and offered incense to the gods. "We therefore," adds the church, "praise not those who voluntarily surrendered themselves; for so are we not taught in the gospel." Nothing less than the presence of the Lord Jesus could strengthen the soul to endure with tranquillity and composure the most agonizing torments, and the most frightful deaths. But thousands have borne with meekness, cheerfulness, and even with joyfulness, the utmost that the power of darkness and the fourth beast of Daniel could do. The pagan bystanders were often moved to pity by their sufferings, but never could understand their calmness of mind, love to their enemies, and willingness to die.

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We will now conclude this general account of the persecution in Asia, and notice particularly the two most eminent persons who suffered death at this time: namely, Justin and Polycarp.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JUSTIN, SURNAMED MARTYR.

Justin was born at Neapolis, in Samaria, of Gentile parents. He carefully studied in his youth the different philosophical sects; but not finding the satisfaction which his heart longed for, he was induced to hear the gospel. In it he found, through God's blessing, a perfect rest for his soul, and every desire of his heart fully met. He became an earnest Christian, and a celebrated writer in defence of Christianity.

Early in the reign of Aurelius, Justin was a marked man. Information was laid against him by one Crescens. He was apprehended with six of his companions, and all were brought before the prefect. They were asked to sacrifice to the gods. "No man," replied Justin, "whose understanding is sound, will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety." "Unless you comply," said the prefect, "you shall be tormented without mercy." "We desire nothing more sincerely," he replied, "than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ." The rest assented, and said, "We are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." The governor then pronounced sentence—"As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged and then beheaded, according to the laws." The martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were scourged and afterwards beheaded. This took place at Rome about the year 165. Thus slept in Jesus one of the early Fathers, and earned

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the glorious title "Martyr," which usually accompanies his name. His writings have been carefully examined by many, and great importance is attached to them.

LINES ON THE MARTYRDOM OF A ROMAN CENTURION.

"Give the Christian to the lion!"
Wildly cry the Roman throng;
"Yes, to Afric's tawny lion!"
Shout the warriors bold and strong.
"Let the hungry lion tear him!"
Echoed glad the laughing crowd;
"Fling him—fling him to the lion!"
Shrieked the noble matron loud.

"Give the Christian to the lion!"
Spake in accents grave and slow,
From their curule seats of honour,
Senators in goodly row.
Then from flight to flight, redouble
Shout, and cheer, and laughter peal,
Till the giant Colosseum
'Neath the tumult seemed to reel;

And the clamours of the people
Through the Arch of Titus roll,
All adown the Roman forum,
To the towering Capitol.
Then a pause—but hush, and listen,
Whence that wild and savage yell?
'Tis the lion of Sahara,
Raging in his grated cell!

Fierce with famine and with fetter,
Shaketh he his tawny mane!
For his living prey impatient,
Struggling 'gainst his bar and chain.
But a voice is stealing faintly
From the next cell, chill and dim;
'Tis the death-doomed Christian, chanting
Soft and low his dying hymn!

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With uplifted hands he prayeth
For the men that ask his blood!
With a holy faith he pleadeth
For that shouting multitude.
They are waiting! Lift the grating—
Comes he forth, serene to die:
With a radiance round his forehead,
And a lustre in his eye.

Never! when 'midst Roman legions,
With the helmet on his brow,
Press'd he to the front of battle
With a firmer step than now.
Lift the grating! He is waiting.
Let the savage lion come!
He can only rend a passage
For the soul to reach her *home!*

THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

The behaviour of the venerable bishop of Smyrna, in view of his martyrdom, was most christian and noble in its bearing. He was prepared and ready for his persecutors, without being rash or imprudent, as some at times, through excitement, had been. When he heard the shouts of the people, demanding his death, it was his intention to remain quietly in the city, and await the issue which God might ordain for him. But, by the entreaties of the church, he suffered himself to be persuaded to take refuge in a neighbouring village. Here he spent the time, with a few friends, occupied, night and day, in praying for all the churches throughout the world. But his pursuers soon discovered his retreat. When told that the public officers were at the door, he invited them in, ordered meat and drink to be set before them, and requested that they would indulge him with one hour of quiet prayer. But the fulness of his heart

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carried him through two hours. His devotions, age, and appearance greatly affected the pagans. He must have been over ninety years of age.

The time being now come, he was conveyed to the city. The proconsul does not appear to have been personally hostile to the Christians. He evidently felt for the aged Polycarp, and did what he could to save him. He urged him to swear by the genius of the Emperor, and give proof of his penitence. But Polycarp was calm and firm, with his eyes uplifted to heaven. The proconsul again urged him, saying, "Revile Christ, and I will release thee." The old man now replied, "Six and eighty years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good; and how could I revile Him, my Lord and Saviour?" The governor finding that both promises and threatenings were in vain, he caused it to be proclaimed by the herald in the circus, "Polycarp has declared himself to be a Christian." The heathen populace, with an infuriated shout, replied, "This is the teacher of atheism, the father of the Christians, the enemy of our gods, by whom so many have been turned away from offering sacrifices." The governor having yielded to the demands of the people, that Polycarp should die at the stake, Jews and pagans hastened together to bring wood for that purpose. As they were about to fasten him with nails to the stake of the pile, he said, "Leave me thus: He who has strengthened me to encounter the flames, will also enable me to stand firm at the stake." Before the fire was lighted he prayed, "Lord, Almighty God, Father of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received from thee the knowledge of thyself; God of angels, and of the whole creation; of the human race, and of the just that live in thy presence;

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I praise thee that thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour, to take part in the number of thy witnesses, in the cup of thy Christ."

The fire was now kindled, but the flames played around the body, forming the appearance of a sail filled with wind. The superstitious Romans, fearing that the fire would not consume him, plunged a spear into his side, and Polycarp was crowned with victory.

These are but short extracts from the accounts that have been handed down to us of the martyrdom of the revered and venerable bishop. The martyrologies are full of particulars. But the Lord greatly blessed the Christlike way in which he suffered for the good of the church. The rage of the people cooled down, as if satisfied with revenge; and their thirst for blood seemed quenched for the time. The proconsul, too, being wearied with such slaughter, absolutely refused to have any more Christians brought before his tribunal. How manifest is the hand of the Lord in this wonderful and sudden change! He had limited the days of their tribulation before they were cast into the furnace, and now they are accomplished: and no power on earth or in hell can prolong them another hour. They had been faithful unto death and received the crown of life.

THE PERSECUTIONS IN FRANCE.
A.D. 177.

We will now turn to the scene of the *second persecution* under this emperor's reign. It took place in France, and exactly *ten years* after the persecution in Asia. There may have been other persecutions during these ten years, but, so far as we know, there are no authentic records of any till 177. The source from which we derive our

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knowledge of the details of this latter persecution is a circular letter from the churches of Lyons and Vienne to the churches in Asia. Whether there be any allusion to these ten historical years in the words of the Lord to the church at Smyrna, we cannot say. Scripture does not say there is. Comparing the history with the epistle, the thought is likely to be suggested. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." In other parts of this mystical book, a day stands for a year, and so it may in the Epistle to Smyrna. History gives us the beginning and the end as to time, and the east and west as to breadth of scene. But we will now look at some of the details, in which the resemblance may be more manifest.

Imprisonment was one of the main features of their sufferings. Many died from the suffocating air of the noisome dungeons. In this respect it differed from the persecution in Asia. The popular excitement rose even higher than at Smyrna. The Christians were insulted and abused whenever they appeared abroad, and even plundered in their own houses. As this popular fury burst forth during the absence of the governor, many were thrown into prison by the inferior magistrates to await his return. But the spirit of persecution on this occasion, though it sprang from the populace, was not confined to them. The governor, on his arrival, seems to have been infected with the fanaticism of the lower classes. To his dishonour as a magistrate, he began the examination of the prisoners with tortures. And the testimony of slaves, contrary to an ancient law in Rome, was not only received against their masters, but wrung from them by the severest sufferings. Consequently, they were ready to say what they were required, to escape the whip and the rack. Having proved, as they

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said, that the Christians practised the most unnatural and worst of crimes in their meetings, they now believed that it was right to indulge themselves in every cruelty. No kindred, no condition, no age, nor sex was spared.

Vettius, a young man of birth and rank, and of great charity and fervency of spirit, on hearing that such charges were laid against his brethren, felt constrained to present himself before the governor as a witness of their innocence. He demanded a hearing, but the governor refused to listen, and only asked him if he too was a Christian? When he distinctly affirmed that he was, the governor ordered him to be thrown into prison with the rest. He afterwards received the crown of martyrdom.

The aged bishop, Pothinus, now over ninety years of age, and probably the one who had brought the gospel to Lyons from Asia, was of course good prey for the lion of hell. He was afflicted with asthma and could scarcely breathe, but, notwithstanding, he must be seized and dragged before the authorities. "Who is the God of the Christians?" asked the governor. The old man quietly told him that he could only come to the knowledge of the true God by shewing a right spirit. Those who surrounded the tribunal strove with each other in giving vent to their rage against the venerable bishop. He was ordered to prison, and after receiving many blows on his way thither, he was cast in among the rest, and in two days fell asleep in Jesus, in the arms of his suffering flock.

What a weight of comfort and encouragement the words of the blessed Lord must have been to these holy sufferers! "Fear none of these things which thou shalt

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suffer," had been addressed to the church in Smyrna, and probably carried to the French churches of Lyons and Vienne by Pothinus. They were experiencing an exact fulfilment of this solemn and prophetic warning: "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried." They knew who was the great enemy—the great persecutor—though emperors, governors, and mobs might be his instruments. But the Lord was with His beloved suffering ones. He not only sustained and comforted them, but He brought out, in the most blessed way, the power of His own presence in the feeblest forms of humanity. This was, we venture to say, a new thing on the earth. The superiority of the Christians to all the inflictions of tortures, and to all the terrors of death, utterly astonished the multitude, stung to the quick their tormentors, and wounded the stoic pride of the Emperor. What could be done with a people who prayed for their persecutors, and manifested the composure and tranquillity of heaven, in the midst of the fires and wild beasts of the amphitheatre? Take one example of what we affirm—an example worthy of all praise, in all time and in all eternity. Divine power displayed, in human weakness.

BLANDINA, a female slave, was distinguished above the rest of the martyrs for the variety of tortures she endured. Her mistress, who also suffered martyrdom, feared lest the faith of her servant might give way under such trials. But it was not so, the Lord be praised! Firm as a rock, but peaceful and unpretending, she endured the most excruciating sufferings. Her tormentors urged her to deny Christ, and confess that the private meetings of the Christians were only for their wicked practices, and they would cease their tortures. But, no!

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her only reply was, "I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness amongst us." The scourge, the rack, the heated iron chair, and the wild beasts, had lost their terror for her. Her heart was fixed on Christ, and He kept her in spirit near to Himself. Her character was fully formed, not by her social condition, of course—that was the most debased in these times—but by her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the indwelling Holy Ghost.

Day after day she was brought forth as a public spectacle of suffering. Being a female and a slave, the heathen expected to force her to a denial of Christ, and to a confession that the Christians were guilty of the crimes reported against them. But it was all in vain. "I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness amongst us," was her quiet but unvarying reply. Her constancy wearied out the inventive cruelty of her tormentors. They were astonished that she lived through the fearful succession of her sufferings. But in her greatest agonies she found strength and relief in looking to Jesus and witnessing for Him. "Blandina was endued with so much fortitude," says the letter from the church at Lyons, written seventeen hundred years ago, "that those who successively tortured her from morning to night were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open."*

Before narrating the closing scene of her sufferings, we would notice what appears to us to be the secret of her great strength and constancy. Doubtless the Lord

* For full details, see *Milner's Church History*, vol. i. p. 194.

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was sustaining her in a remarkable way as a witness for Him, and as a testimony to all ages of the power of Christianity over the human mind, compared with all the religions that there were or ever had been on the earth. Still, we would say particularly, that her *humility and godly fear* were the sure indications of her power against the enemy, and of her unfaltering fidelity to Christ. She was thus working out her own salvation—deliverance from the difficulties of the way—by a deep sense of her own conscious weakness, indicated by "fear and trembling."

When on her way back from the amphitheatre to the prison, in company with her fellow sufferers, they were surrounded by their sorrowing friends when they had an opportunity, and in their sympathy and love addressed them as "martyrs for Christ." But this they instantly checked; saying, "We are not worthy of such an honour. The struggle is not over; and the dignified name of Martyr properly belongs to Him only who is the true and faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the Prince of life; or, at least, only to those whose testimony Christ has sealed by their constancy to the end. We are but poor humble confessors." With tears they besought their brethren to pray for them that they might be firm and true to the end. Thus their weakness was their strength, for it led them to lean on the mighty One. And so it always is, and ever has been, in small as well as in great trials. But a fresh sorrow awaited them on their return to the prison. They found some who had given way through natural fear, and had denied that they were Christians. But they had gained nothing thereby; Satan had not let them off. Under a charge of other crimes they were kept in prison. With these weak ones Blandina and the others prayed with many

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tears, that they might be restored and strengthened. The Lord answered their prayers, so that when they were brought up again for further examination, they stedfastly confessed their faith in Christ, and thus passed sentence of death on themselves, and received the crown of martyrdom.

Nobler names, as men would say, than Blandina's had passed off the bloody scene; and honoured names too, that had witnessed with great fortitude: such as Vittius, Pothinus, Sanctus, Naturus, and Attalius; but the last day of her trial was come, and the last pain she was ever to feel, and the last tear she was ever to shed. She was brought up for her final examination with a youth of fifteen, named Ponticus. They were ordered to swear by the gods; they firmly refused, but were calm and unmoved. The multitude were incensed at their magnanimous patience. The whole round of barbarities were inflicted. Ponticus, though animated and strengthened by the prayers of his sister in Christ, soon sank under the tortures, and fell asleep in Jesus.

And now came the noble and blessed Blandina, as the church styles her. Like a mother who was needed to comfort and encourage her children, she was kept to the last day of the games. She had sent her children on before, and was now longing to follow after them. They had joined the noble army of martyrs above, and were resting with Jesus, as weary warriors rest, in the peaceful paradise of God. After she had endured stripes, she was seated in a hot iron chair; then she was enclosed in a net and thrown to a bull; and having been tossed some time by the animal, a soldier plunged a spear into her side. No doubt she was dead long before the spear reached her, but in this she was honoured to be like her

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Lord and Master. Bright indeed will be the crown amidst the many crowns in heaven, of the constant, humble, patient, enduring Blandina.

But the fierce and savage rage of the heathen, instigated by Satan, had not yet reached its height. They began a new war with the dead bodies of the saints. Their blood had not satiated them. They must have their ashes. Hence the mutilated bodies of the martyrs were collected and burned, and thrown into the river Rhone, with the fire that consumed them, lest a particle should be left to pollute the land. But rage, however fierce, will finally expend itself; and nature, however savage, will become weary of bloodshed; and so, many Christians survived this terrible persecution.

We have thus gone, more than usual, into details in speaking of the persecutions under Marcus Aurelius. So far, they are a fulfilment, we believe, of the solemn and prophetic warnings of the address to Smyrna; and also, in a remarkable manner, of the Lord's promised grace. The sufferers were filled and animated by His own Spirit. "Even their persecutors," says Neander, "were never mentioned by them with resentment; but they prayed that God would forgive those who had subjected them to such cruel sufferings. They left a legacy to their brethren, not of strife and war, but of peace and joy, unanimity and love."

Thou art home at last, each waymark past,
  Thou hast sped to the goal before me;
And oh, my tears fall thick and fast,
  Like the hopes that had blossomed o'er thee.
My lips refuse to say, Farewell,
  For our life-link nought can sever;
Thou'rt early gone with Christ to dwell,
  Where we both shall be for ever.

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THE POWER OF PRAYER.

In tracing the *silver line* of God's grace in His beloved people, we have now to notice a report which was widely spread among the Christians after the beginning of the third century. It occurred towards the close of the reign of Aurelius, and led him, it is said, to change the course of his policy towards the Christians. In one of his campaigns against the Germans and Sarmatians he was thrown into a situation of extreme peril. The burning sun shone full in the faces of his soldiers; they were hemmed in by the barbarians; they were exhausted by wounds and fatigue, and parched with thirst; while, at the same time, the enemy was preparing to attack them. In this extremity, the twelfth legion, said to be composed of Christians, stepped forward and knelt down in prayer; suddenly the sky was overspread with clouds, and the rain began to fall heavily. The Roman soldiers took off their helmets to catch the refreshing drops; but the shower speedily increased to a storm of hail, accompanied with thunder and lightning, which so alarmed the barbarians that the Romans gained an easy victory.

The Emperor, so struck with such a miraculous answer to prayer, acknowledged the interposition of the God of the Christians, conferred honours on the legion, and issued an edict in favour of their religion. After this, if not before, they were called "the thundering legion." Historians, from Eusebius down, have noticed this remarkable occurrence.

But, like a tale that is often told, many things have been added to it. There is good reason to believe, however, that a providential answer in favour of the Romans was given to prayer. This much seems quite evident.

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And to faith there is nothing incredible in such an event; though some of the circumstances related are questionable. For example, a Roman legion at that time would probably number five thousand men; and there may have been a great many Christians in the twelfth—which was a distinguished legion—yet it would be hard to believe that they were all Christians.

On their return from the war, they no doubt related to their brethren the merciful intervention of God in answer to prayer; and which the church would record and spread amongst the Christians to His praise and glory. But the facts are even more fully confirmed by the Romans. They also believed that the deliverance came from heaven, but in answer to the prayers of the Emperor to the gods. Hence the event was commemorated, after their usual manner, on columns, medals, and paintings. On these the Emperor is represented as stretching forth his hands in supplication; the army as catching the rain in their helmets; and Jupiter as launching forth his bolts on the barbarians, who lie slain on the ground.

A few years after this remarkable event, Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher and the persecutor, died. Great changes quickly followed. The glory of the empire, and the effort to maintain the dignity of the old Roman religion, expired with himself; but Christianity made great and rapid advancement. Men of ability and learning were raised up about this time, who boldly and powerfully advocated its claims with their pens. These are called *Apologists*. TERTULLIAN, an African, who is said to have been born A.D. 160, may be considered as the ablest and the most perfect type of this class.

The more enlightened of the heathen now began to

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feel that if their religion was to withstand the aggressive power of the gospel, it must be defended and reformed. Hence the controversy commenced; and one *Celsus*, an Epicurean philosopher, said to be born in the same year as Tertullian, stood forth as the leader on the controversial side of paganism. From about this period—the closing years of the second century—church records become more interesting, because more definite and reliable. But before proceeding farther with the general history, it may be well to retrace our steps and glance briefly at the *internal* history of the church from the beginning. We shall thus see how some of the things which are still observed, and with which we are familiar, were first introduced.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

HERE we step once more on sure ground. We have the privilege and satisfaction of appealing to the sacred writings. Before the canon of scripture was closed, many of the errors, both in doctrine and practice, which have since troubled and rent in pieces the professing church, were allowed to spring up. These were detected and exposed by the inspired apostles, in the wisdom and grace of God. If we keep this in mind, we shall not be surprised to meet with many things in the internal history of the church entirely contrary to scripture. Neither need we have any difficulty in withstanding them. We have been armed by the apostles. The love of office and pre-eminence in the church was manifested at an early period, and many observances of mere official invention were added. The "grain of mustard seed" became a great tree—the symbol of political power on the earth: this was and is the outward aspect of Christendom; but inwardly the *leaven* did its evil work, "till the whole was leavened."

Those who have carefully studied Matthew xiii. with other passages in the Acts and the Epistles relating to the profession of the name of Christ, should have a very correct idea of both the early and later history of the church. It embraces the entire period, from the sowing

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of the seed by the Son of man, until the harvest, though under the similitude of the kingdom of heaven. This is a great relief to the mind, and prepares us for many a dark and distressing scene, wickedly perpetrated under the fair name and cloak of Christianity. We will now turn to some of these passages.

1. Our blessed Lord, in the parable of the wheat and tares, predicts what would take place. "The kingdom of heaven," He says, "is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." In course of time "the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit." This was the rapid spread of Christianity in the earth. But we also read "then appeared the tares also." These were false professors of Christ's name. The Lord Jesus sowed good seed. Satan, through the carelessness and infirmity of man, sowed tares. But what was to be done with them? Were they to be rooted out of the kingdom? The Lord says, No; "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest;" that is, till the end of the age or dispensation when the Lord comes in judgment.

But here, some may inquire, Does the Lord mean that the wheat and the tares are to grow together in the church? Certainly not. They were not to be *rooted out* of the *field*, but to be put out of the church when *manifested* as wicked persons. The church and the kingdom are quite distinct, though the one may be said to be in the other. The *field* is the world, not the church. The limits of the kingdom stretch far beyond the limits of the true church of God. Christ builds the church; men have to do with extending the proportions of Christen-

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dom. If the expression, "the kingdom of heaven," meant the same as "the church of God," there ought to be no discipline at all. Whereas the apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, expressly says, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." But he was not to be put out of the kingdom, for that could only be done by taking away his life. The wheat and the tares are to grow together in the field until the harvest. Then the Lord Himself, in His providence, will deal with the tares. They shall be bound in bundles and cast into the fire. Nothing then can be plainer than the Lord's teaching in this parable. The tares are to be put away from the Lord's table, but not rooted out of the field. The church was not to use worldly punishments in dealing with ecclesiastical offenders. But, alas, the very thing which the Lord is here guarding His disciples against came to pass, as the long list of martyrs so painfully shews. Pains and penalties were brought in as discipline, and the refractory were handed over to the civil power to be punished with fire and sword.

2. In Acts xx. we read that "grievous wolves" would make their appearance in the church after the departure of the apostle. In Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians —supposed to be his first inspired Epistles—he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work, and that other evil things would follow. In writing to the Philippians he tells them, weeping, that many walk as "the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Many were calling themselves Christians, but minding earthly things." Such a state of things could not escape the spiritual eye of him whose *one object* was Christ in glory, and practi-

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cal conformity to His ways when on earth. In his Second Epistle to Timothy—probably the last he ever wrote—he compares Christendom to "a great house," in which are all manner of vessels, "some to honour, and some to dishonour." This is a picture of the outward universal church. Nevertheless, the Christian cannot leave it, and individual responsibility can never cease. But he is to clear himself from all that is contrary to the name of the Lord. The directions are most plain and precious for the spiritually minded in all ages. The Christian must have no association with that which is untrue. Such is the meaning of purging himself from the vessels to dishonour. He is to clear himself from all that is not to the Lord's honour. John and the other apostles speak of the same things, and give the same divine directions; but we need not here pursue them further. Enough has been pointed out to prepare the reader for what we must meet with in that which calls itself *Christian*.

THE IMMEDIATE FOLLOWERS OF THE APOSTLES.

Here an important question arises, and one that has been often asked, At what time, and by what means, did *clericalism*—the whole system of clergy—gain so firm a footing in the professing church? To answer this question fully would be to write in detail the internal history of the church. Its constitution and character were wholly changed by the introduction of the clerical system. But its growth and organization were gradual. Arguments were drawn from the Old Testament, and, in a short time, Christianity was recast in the mould of Judaism. The distinction between bishops and presbyters, between a priestly order and the common priest-

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hood of all believers, and the multiplication of church offices, followed rapidly as consequences. But however difficult it may be now to trace the inroads of clericalism, the *synagogue* was its model.

We learn from the whole of the New Testament that *Judaism* was the unwearied and unrelenting enemy of Christianity in every point of view. It laboured incessantly, on the one hand to introduce its rites and ceremonies; and on the other to persecute unto the death all who were faithful to Christ and to the true principles of the church of God. This we see especially from the Acts and the Epistles. But when the extraordinary gifts in the church ceased, and when the noble defenders of the faith, in the persons of the inspired apostles, passed away, we may easily imagine how Judaism would prevail. Besides, the early churches were chiefly composed of converts from the Jewish synagogue, who long retained their Jewish prejudices.

CLERICALISM, then, we firmly believe sprang from JUDAISM. From the days of the apostles until now the root of the whole fabric and dominion of clericalism is there. Philosophy and heresy, no doubt, did much to corrupt the church and lead her to join hands with the world; but the order of the clergy and all that belongs to it must be founded on the Jews' religion. It is more than probable, however, that many may have been persuaded then, as many have been since, that Christianity is a *continuation* of Judaism, in place of being its perfect *contrast*. The Judaizing teachers boldly affirmed that Christianity was merely a graft on Judaism. But throughout the epistles we everywhere learn that the one was earthly and the other heavenly; that the one

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belonged to the old, and the other to the new creation; that the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

We will now return to the immediate followers of the apostles.

THE APOSTOLICAL FATHERS, as they are called, such as Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Barnabas, were the immediate followers of the inspired apostles. They had listened to their instructions, laboured with them in the gospel, and probably had been familiarly acquainted with them. But, notwithstanding the high privileges which they enjoyed as scholars of the apostles, they very soon departed from the doctrines which had been committed to them, especially as to church government. They seem to have completely forgotten—judging from the Epistles which bear their names—the great New Testament truth of the Holy Spirit's presence in the assembly. Surely both John and Paul speak much of the presence, indwelling, sovereign rule, and authority of the Holy Spirit in the church. John xiii.—xvi., Acts ii., 1 Corinthians xii., xiv., Ephesians i.—iv. give plain directions and instructions on this fundamental truth of the church of God. Had this truth been maintained according to the apostle's exhortation, "Endeavouring to keep"—not to make—"the unity of the Spirit," clericalism could never have found a place in Christendom.

The new teachers of the church seem also to have forgotten the beautiful simplicity of the divine order in the church. There were only two orders of office bearers—elders and deacons. The one was appointed to attend to the temporal, the other to the spiritual need of the assembly

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of the saints. Elder or bishop simply means overseer, one who takes a spiritual oversight. He may have been "apt to teach," or he may not; he was not an ordained teacher, but an ordained overseer. And as for the institutions of divine appointment, we only find in the New Testament, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Nothing could be more simple, more easily understood, or more plain, as to all the directions given for faith and practice; but there was no room left for the exaltation and glory of man in the church of God. The Holy Ghost had come down to take the lead in the assembly, according to the word of the Lord, and the promise of the Father; and no Christian, however gifted, believing this, could take the place of leader, and thus practically displace the Holy Spirit. But, from the moment that this truth was lost sight of, men began to contend for place and power, and of course the Holy Spirit had no longer His right place in the assembly.

Scarcely had the voice of inspiration become silent in the church, than we hear the voice of the new teachers crying loudly and earnestly for the highest honours being paid to the bishop, and a supreme place being given to him. Not a word about the Spirit's place as sovereign ruler in the church of God. This is evident from the Epistles of Ignatius, said to have been written A.D. 107. Many great names, we are aware, have questioned their authenticity; and many great names contend that they have been satisfactorily proved to be genuine. The proofs on either side lie outside of our line. The Church of England has long accepted them as genuine, and considers them as the basis, and as the triumphant vindication of the antiquity of episcopacy. The following are a few specimens of his admonitions to the churches.

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IGNATIUS, in the course of his journey from Antioch to Rome,* wrote seven Epistles. One to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrneans, and one to his friend Polycarp. Being written on the eve of his martyrdom, and with great earnestness and vehemence, and having been the disciple and friend of St. John, and at that time bishop of Antioch, probably the most renowned in Christendom, his Epistles must have produced a great impression on the churches; besides, the way to office, authority, and power has always a great charm for vain human nature.

In writing to the church at Ephesus he says, "Let us take heed, brethren, that we set not ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God. . . . It is therefore evident that we ought to look upon the bishop even as we do upon the Lord Himself." In his Epistle to the Magnesians he says, "I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord; your bishops presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles; and your deacons, most dear to me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ." We find the same strain in his letter to the Trallians: "Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live, not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ who died for us. . . . Guard yourselves against such persons; and that you will do if you are not puffed up: but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your bishop, and from the commands of the apostles." Passing over several of his letters to the churches, we will only give one more specimen from his Epistle to the Philadelphians:

* See Journey and Martyrdom of Ignatius, p. 246.

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"I cried whilst I was among you, I spake with a loud voice—attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons. Now some supposed that I spake this as foreseeing the division that should come among you. But He is my witness for whose sake I am in bonds, that I knew nothing from any man: but the Spirit spake, saying on this wise: Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; flee divisions; be the followers of Christ, as He was of His Father."*

In the last quotation it is very evident that the venerable father wishes to add to his theories the weight of inspiration. But, however extravagant and unaccountable this idea may be, we must give him credit for honesty and sincerity. That he was a devout Christian, and full of religious zeal, no one can doubt; but that he greatly deceived himself in this and in other matters there can be as little doubt. The leading idea in all his letters is the perfect submission of the people to their rulers, or of the laity to their clergy. He was, no doubt, anxious for the welfare of the church, and fearing the effect of the "divisions" which he refers to, he probably thought that a strong government, in the hands of rulers, would be the best means of preserving it from the inroads of error. "Give diligence," he says, "to be established in the doctrine of our Lord and the apostles, together with your most worthy bishop, and the well-woven spiritual crown of your presbytery, and your godly deacons. Be subject to your bishop and to one another, as Jesus

* The above extracts are taken from *Wake's Translation*. See also "A Full and Faithful Analysis of the Writings of Ignatius, Clement, Polycarp, and Hermas." *The Inquirer*, vol. ii. p. 317.

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Christ to the Father, according to the flesh; and as the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; that so there may be a union among you both in body and in spirit." Thus the mitre was placed on the head of the highest dignitary, and henceforth became the object of ecclesiastical ambition, and not unfrequently of the most unseemly contention, with all their demoralizing consequences.

CLERICALISM, MINISTRY, AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

It is assumed that these Epistles were written only a few years after the death of St. John, and that the writer must have been intimately acquainted with his mind, and was only carrying out his views. Hence it is said, that episcopacy is coeval with Christianity. But it matters comparatively little by whom they were written, or the precise time; they are not scripture, and the reader must judge of their character by the word of God, and of their influence by the history of the church. The mind of the Lord, concerning His church, and the responsibility of His people, must be learnt from His own word, and not from the writings of any Father, however early or esteemed. And here, it may be well, before leaving this point, to place before our readers a few portions of the word, which they will do well to compare with the above extracts. They refer to christian *ministry* and individual responsibility. Thus learn the mighty difference between ministry and office; or, between being esteemed for your work's sake, not merely *office' sake.*

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, from verse 45 of chapter xxiv. to verse 31 of chapter xxv., we have three parables, in which the Lord addresses the disciples as to their conduct during His absence.

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1. The subject of the first is *the responsibility of ministry within the house*—in the church. "Whose house are we." Thus we read, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." Real ministry is of the Lord and of Him alone. This is what we have to note in view of what took place on the very threshold of Christianity. And He makes much of faithfulness or unfaithfulness in His house. His people are near and dear to His heart. Those who have been humble and faithful during His absence will be made rulers over all His goods when He returns. The true minister of Christ has to do directly with Himself. He is the hireling of no man, or of any particular body of men. "Blessed is that servant, *whom his lord* when he cometh *shall find* so doing." Failure in ministry is also spoken of and dealt with by the Lord Himself.

"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." This is the other and sad side of the picture. The character of ministry is greatly affected by holding or rejecting the truth of the Lord's coming. In place of devoted service to the household, with his heart set on the master's approval on his return, there is assumption, tyranny, and worldliness. The doom of such, when the Lord comes, will be worse than that of the world. "He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrite"—Judas' place—where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Such are the fearful consequences of

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forgetfulness of the Lord's return. But this is more than a mere doctrinal mistake, or a difference of opinion about the coming of the Lord. It was "*in his heart*," his will was concerned in it. He wished in his heart that the Lord would stay away, as His coming would spoil all his schemes, and bring to a close all his wordly greatness. Is not this too true a picture of what has happened? and what a solemn lesson for those who take to themselves a place of service in the church. The mere appointment of the sovereign, or the choice of the people, will not be enough in that day, unless they have also been the chosen of the Lord and faithful in His house.

2. In the second parable, professing Christians, during the Lord's absence, are represented as virgins who went out to meet the Bridegroom and light Him to His house. This was the attitude of the early Christians. They came out from the world, and from Judaism, to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. But we know what happened. He tarries: they all slumbered and slept. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." From the first, till the beginning of the present century, we hear very little about the coming of the Lord. Now and then, here and there, a feeble voice may be heard on the subject; but not until the early part of the present century did the midnight cry go forth. Now we have many tracts and volumes on the subject, and many are preaching it in nearly all lands under heaven. The midnight is past, the morning cometh.

The revival of the truth of the Lord's coming marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church. And, like all revivals, it was the work of the Holy Spirit, and that

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by instruments of his own choosing, and by means which He saw fitting. And how like the Lord's long suffering, that in this great movement there should be time given between the cry and the arrival of the Bridegroom to prove the condition of each. Five of the ten virgins had no oil in their lamps—no Christ, no Holy Spirit dwelling in them. They had only the outward lamp of profession. How awfully solemn the thought, if we look at Christendom from this point of view! Five of every ten are *unreal*, and against whom the door will be shut for ever. How this thought should move to earnestness and energy in evangelizing! May we wisely improve the time thus graciously given between the going forth of the midnight cry, and the coming of the Bridegroom.

3. In the first parable, it is ministry *inside the house;* in the third, it is ministry *outside the house*—evangelizing. In the second parable, it is the personal expectation of the Lord's coming, with the possession of that which is requisite to go in with Him to the marriage supper of the King's son.

"The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." Here the Lord is represented as leaving this world and going back to heaven; and while He is gone there, His servants are to trade with the talents committed to them. "Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two." Here we have the true principle and the true character of christian

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ministry. The Lord Himself called the servants and gave them the talents, and the servant is responsible to the Lord Himself for the fulfilment of his calling. The exercise of gift, whether *inside* or *outside* the house, although subject to the directions of the word, and always to be exercised in love and for blessing, is in no wise dependent on the will of sovereign, priest, or people, but on Christ only, the true Head of the church. It is a grave and solemn thing for any one to interfere with Christ's claims on the service of His servant. To touch this is to set aside responsibility to Christ, and to overthrow the fundamental principle of Christianity.

Priesthood was the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish dispensation; *ministry*, according to God, is characteristic of the Christian period. Hence the utter failure of the professing church, when it sought to imitate Judaism in so many ways—both in its priesthood and its ritualism. If a priestly order, with rites and ceremonies, be still necessary, the efficacy of the work of Christ is called in question. In fact, though not in words, it strikes at the root of Christianity. But all is settled by the word of God. "But this man, after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. . . . Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Hebrews x. 1–25.

Ministry, then, is a subject of the highest dignity and the deepest interest. It testifies to the work, the victory, and the glory of Jesus, that the lost may be saved. It is the activity of God's love going out to an alien and

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ruined world, and earnestly beseeching souls to be reconciled to Him. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; *and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.*" (2 Cor. v. 19–21.) Jewish priesthood maintained the people in their relations with God; christian ministry is God in grace delivering souls from sin and ruin, and bringing them near to Himself, as happy worshippers in the most holy place.

To return to our parable. There is one thing specially to be noticed here, as shewing the Lord's sovereignty and wisdom in connection with ministry. He gave differently to each, and to each according to his ability. Each one had a natural capacity which fitted him for the service in which he was employed, and gifts bestowed, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, for its fulfilment. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Eph. iv.) The servant must have certain natural qualifications for his work, besides the power of the Spirit of God. If the Lord calls a man to preach the gospel, there will be a natural ability for it. Then the Lord may create in his heart by the Holy Spirit a real love for souls, which is the best gift of the evangelist. Then he ought to stir up and exercise his gift according to his ability, for the blessing of souls and the glory of God. May we remember that we are responsible for these two things: the gift graciously bestowed, and the ability in which the gift is to be exercised. When the Lord comes to reckon with His servants, it will not be enough to say, I was never educated for, or appointed to, the ministry. The question will be, Did I wait on the Lord to be used by Him according to what He had

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fitted me for? or did I hide my talent in the earth? Faithfulness or unfaithfulness to Him will be the only thing in question.

That which distinguished the faithful from the unfaithful servant was *confidence* in their master. The unfaithful servant knew not the Lord: he acted from fear, not from love, and so hid his one talent in the earth. The faithful knew the Lord, trusted Him, and served from love, and were rewarded. Love is the only true spring of service for Christ, either in the church or in the outside world. May we never be found making excuses for ourselves, like the "wicked and slothful" servant, but be ever reckoning on the love, grace, truth, and power of our blessed Saviour and Lord.

THE EFFECT OF THE NEW ORDER OF CLERGY.

It may be only fair to suppose that those good men, by whose means a new order of things was brought into the church, and the free ministry of the Holy Spirit in the members of the body excluded, had the welfare of the church at heart. It is evident that Ignatius, by this arrangement, hoped to avoid "divisions." But, however good our motives may be, it is the height of human folly —if not worse—to interfere with or seek to change the order of God. This was Eve's mistake, and we all know the consequences too well. It was also the original sin of the church, and from which it has suffered these eighteen hundred years.

The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is the only power of ministry; but the Lord must be left free to choose and employ His own servants. Human arrangements and appointments necessarily interfere with the liberty of the Spirit. They quench the Holy Spirit. He

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only knows where the ability is, and where, when, and how to dispense the gifts. Speaking of the church as it was in the days of the apostles, it is said, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he [the Holy Ghost] will." And again we read, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," or for the profit of all. (1 Corinthians xii.) Here all is in divine hands. The Holy Spirit dispenses the gift. It is to be exercised in acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ; and God gives efficacy to the ministry. What a ministry; Spirit, Lord, and God: its source, power, and character! How great, how sad the change, to king, prelate, or people! Is not this apostasy? But while we object to mere human appointment to office, qualified or not qualified, we would contend most earnestly for the ministry of the word to both saints and sinners.

The church, alas, soon found that to hinder ministry, as it is set before us in the word of God, and introduce a new order of things, did not hinder divisions, heresies, and false teachers springing up. True, the flesh, in the most real and gifted Christian, may manifest itself, but when the Spirit of God is acting in power, and the authority of the word owned, the remedy is at hand: the evil will be judged in humility and faithfulness to Christ. From this time—the beginning of the second century, and before it—the church was greatly disturbed by heresies; and as time rolled on, things never grew better, but always worse.

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IRENÆUS, a Christian of great celebrity, who succeeded Pothinus as bishop of Lyons, A.D. 177, has left us much information on the subject of the early heresies. He is supposed to have written about the year 183. His great book "*against heresies*" is said to contain a defence of the holy catholic faith, and an examination and refutation of the false doctrines advocated by the principal heretics.*

THE ORIGIN OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CLERGY AND LAITY.

Christianity at the beginning had no *separate priestly order*. Its *first* converts went everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus. They were the *first* to spread abroad the glad tidings of salvation, even before the apostles themselves had left Jerusalem. (Acts viii. 11.) In course of time, when converts were found sufficient in any place to form an assembly, they came together in the name of the Lord on the first day of the week, to break bread, and to edify one another in love. (Acts xx. 7.) When the opportunity came for an apostle to visit such gatherings, he ordained elders to take the spiritual oversight of the little flock; deacons were chosen by the assembly. This was the entire constitution of the first churches. If the Lord raised up an evangelist and souls were converted, they were baptized unto the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This was of course outside the assembly, and not a church act. After due examination by the spiritual as to the genuineness of the evangelist's work, and the assembly being satisfied, they were received into communion.

* *Irenæus against Heresies.* Clarke, Edinburgh.

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It will be seen, from this brief sketch of the divine order of the churches, that there was no distinction such as "the clergy," and "the laity." All stood on the same ground as to priesthood, worship, and nearness to God. As the Apostles Peter and John say, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And thus could the whole assembly sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The only priesthood then, in the church of God, is the common priesthood of *all* believers. The humblest menial in the palace of the archbishop, if washed in the blood of Christ, is whiter than snow, and fitted to enter the most holy place and worship within the veil.

There is no outer court worship now. The separation of a privileged class—a sacerdotal order—is unknown in the New Testament. The distinction betwen *clergy* and *laity* was suggested by Judaism, and human invention soon made it great; but it was episcopal ordination that established the distinction and widened the separation. The bishop gradually assumed the title of Pontiff. The presbyters, and at length the deacons, became, as well as the bishops, a sacred order. The place of mediation and of greater nearness to God was assumed by the priestly caste, and also of authority over the laity. In place of God speaking direct to the heart and conscience by His own word, and the heart and conscience brought direct into the presence of God, it was priesthood coming in between them. Thus the word of God was lost sight of, and faith stood in the opinions of men. The blessed

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Lord Jesus, as the Great High Priest of His people, and as the one Mediator between God and men, was thus practically displaced and set aside.*

Thus, alas, we see in the church what has been true of man from Adam downwards. Everything that has been entrusted to man has failed. From the time that the responsibility of maintaining the church as the pillar and ground of the truth fell into man's hands, there has been nothing but failure. The word of God, however, remains the same, and its authority can never fail, blessed be His name. One of the main objects of these "Short Papers" is to recall the reader's attention to the principles and order of the church, as taught in the New Testament. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." That is, we must worship and serve Him according to *the truth*, and under the guidance and unction of the Holy Spirit, if we would glorify His name and worship and serve Him acceptably.

Almost all ecclesiastical writers affirm *that neither the Lord Himself nor His apostles gave any distinct precepts as to the order and government of the church—that such things were left to the wisdom and prudence of her office-bearers and the character of the times.* By this assump-

* One of the highest authorities as to episcopal order is of opinion that the distinction between the clergy and the laity is derived from the Old Testament: that as the high priest had his office assigned him, and the priests also their proper station, and the Levites their peculiar service; so laymen in like manner were under the obligations proper to laymen. He also states that the common priesthood of all believers is taught in the New Testament, but that the Fathers from the earliest times formed the church on the Jewish system.—*Bingham on the Antiquity of the Christian Church*, vol. i., p. 42.

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tion the widest range was given to the human will. We know the consequences. Man sought his own glory. The simplicity of the New Testament, the lowly path of the Lord and His apostles, the zeal and self-denial of a Paul, all were overlooked, and worldly greatness soon became the object and ambition of the clergy. A brief sketch of the bishop's office will set these things in a clear light, and, we doubt not, will greatly interest our readers.

WHAT WAS A BISHOP IN EARLY TIMES?

The humblest peasant is familiar with the grandeur and worldly greatness of a bishop; but he may not know how a minister of Christ and a successor of the humble fishermen of Galilee came to such dignity. In the days of the apostles, and for more than a hundred years after, the office of a bishop was a laborious but "good work." He had the charge of a single church, which might ordinarily be contained in a private house. He was not then as a "lord over God's heritage," but in reality its minister and servant, instructing the people and attending on the sick and poor in person. The presbyters, no doubt, assisted in the management of the general affairs of the church, and also the deacons; but the bishop had the chief part of the service. He had no authority, however, to decree or sanction anything without the approval of the presbytery and people. There was no thought then of "inferior clergy" under him. And at that time the churches had no revenues, except the voluntary contributions of the people, which, moderate as they doubtless were, would leave a very small emolument for the bishop, after the poor and needy were attended to.

But in those early times office-bearers in the church

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continued, in all probability, to carry on their former trades and occupations, supporting themselves and their families in the same manner as before. A bishop, says Paul, "must be given to hospitality." And this he could not have been, had he depended for his income on the earnings of the poor. It was not until about the year 245 that the clergy received a salary, and were forbidden to follow their worldly employments; but towards the close of the second century, circumstances arose in the history of the church which greatly affected the original humility and simplicity of its overseers, and which tended to the corruption of the priestly order. "This change began," says Waddington, "towards the end of the second century; and it is certain that at this period we find the first complaints of the incipient corruption of the clergy." From the moment that the interests of the ministers became at all distinguished from the interests of Christianity, many and great changes for the worse may be considered to have begun. We will notice some of these circumstances; and first,

THE ORIGIN OF DIOCESES.

The bishops who lived in cities, either by their own preaching or by the preaching of others—presbyters, deacons, or people—were the means of gathering new churches in the neighbouring towns and villages. These young assemblies, very naturally, continued under the care and protection of the city churches, by whose means they had received the gospel and were formed into churches. Ecclesiastical provinces were thus gradually formed, which the Greeks afterwards denominated *dioceses*. The city bishops claimed the privilege of appointing office-bearers to these rural churches; and the

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persons to whom they committed their instruction and care were called *district bishops*. These formed a new class, coming in between the bishops and the presbyters, being considered inferior to the former and superior to the latter. Thus distinctions and divisions were created, and offices multiplied.

THE ORIGIN OF THE METROPOLITAN BISHOP.

Churches thus constituted and regulated rapidly increased throughout the empire. In the management of their internal affairs, every church was essentially distinct from every other, though walking in spiritual fellowship with all others, and considered as part of the one Church of God. But, as the number of believers increased and churches were extended, diversities in doctrine and discipline sprang up, which could not always be settled in the individual assemblies. This gave rise to councils or synods. These were composed chiefly of those who took part in the ministry. But when the deputies of the churches were thus assembled, it was soon discovered that the control of a president was required. Unless the government of the Holy Spirit in the church be owned and submitted to, there must be anarchy without a president. The bishop of the capital of the province was usually appointed to preside, under the lofty title of the *Metropolitan*. On his return home it was hard to lay aside these occasional honours, so he very soon claimed the personal and permanent dignity of the *Metropolitan*.

The bishops and presbyters up till about this time were generally viewed as equal in rank, or the same thing; the terms being used synonymously; but now the former considered themselves as invested with supreme power in

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the guidance of the church, and were determined to maintain themselves in this authority. The presbyters refused to concede to them this new and self-assumed dignity, and sought to maintain their own independence. Hence arose the great controversy between the presbyterian and the episcopalian systems, which has continued until this day, and of which we may speak more particularly hereafter. Enough has been said to shew the reader the beginning of many things which still live before us in the professing church. In the consecrated order of clergy he will find the germ out of which sprang at length the whole mediæval priesthood, the sin of simony, the laws of celibacy, and the fearful corruptions of the dark ages.*

Having thus glanced at what was going on inside the church from the beginning, and especially amongst her rulers, we will now resume the general history from the death of M. Aurelius.

* For full details, see Neander, vol. i., p. 259; Mosheim, vol. i., p. 91; Bingham, vol. i.

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CHAPTER IX.

FROM COMMODUS TILL THE ACCESSION OF CONSTANTINE.

A.D. 180–313.

CHRISTIANITY, under the successors of Aurelius, enjoyed a season of comparative repose and tranquillity. The depravity of Commodus was overruled to subserve the interests of the Christians after their long sufferings under his father: and the brief reign of many of the emperors left them no leisure to war against the aggressions of Christianity. "During little more than a century," says Milman, "from the accession of Commodus to that of Diocletian, more than twenty emperors flitted like shadows along the tragic scene of the imperial palace. The empire of the world became the prize of bold adventure, or the precarious gift of a lawless soldiery. A long line of military adventurers, often strangers to the name, to the race, to the language of Rome—Africans, Pyreans, Arabs, and Goths—seized the quickly shifting sceptre of the world. The change of sovereign was almost always a change of dynasty, or, by some strange fatality, every attempt to re-establish an hereditary succession was thwarted by the vices or imbecility of the second generation."

Thus the Christians had about a hundred years of comparative rest and peace. There were, no doubt, many cases of persecution and martyrdom during that

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period, but such cases were more the result of personal hostility in some individual than from any systematic policy pursued by the government against Christianity. The first and commanding object of each succeeding emperor was to secure his contested throne. They had no time to devote to the suppression of Christianity, or to the social and religious changes within the empire. Thus the great Head of the church—who is also "head over all things to the church"—made the weakness and insecurity of the throne the indirect means of the strength and prosperity of the church.

But although the reign of Commodus was generally favourable to the progress of Christianity, there was one remarkable instance of persecution which we must note.

APOLLONIUS, a Roman senator, renowned for learning and philosophy, was a sincere Christian. Many of the nobility of Rome, with their whole families, embraced Christianity about this time. The dignity of the Roman senate felt itself lowered by such innovations. This led, it is supposed, to the accusation of Apollonius before the magistrate. His accuser, under an old and unrepealed law of Antoninus Pius, which enacted grievous punishments against the accusers of Christians, was sentenced to death and executed. The magistrate asked the prisoner, Apollonius, to give an account of his faith before the senate and the court. He complied, and boldly confessed his faith in Christ; in consequence of which, by a decree of the senate, he was beheaded. It is said by some to be the only trial recorded in history where both the accused and the accuser suffered judicially. But the Lord's hand was in it, and high above both the

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accuser and the magistrate, Perennius, who condemned them both. From this period many families of distinction and opulence in Rome professed Christianity, and sometimes we meet with Christians in the imperial family.

After a reign of about twelve years, the unworthy son of Aurelius died from the effects of a poisoned cup of wine.

PERTINAX, immediately upon the death of Commodus, was elected by the senate to the throne; but after a brief reign of sixty-six days was killed in an insurrection. A civil war followed, and Septimius Severus ultimately obtained the sovereign power in Rome.

CHRISTIANITY UNDER THE REIGN OF SEVERUS. A.D. 194–210.

In the early part of the reign of Severus he was rather favourable to the Christians. A christian slave, named Proculus, was the means of restoring the Emperor to health, by anointing him with oil. This remarkable cure, no doubt in answer to prayer, gave the Christians great favour in the eyes of Severus. Proculus received an honourable position in the imperial family, and a christian nurse and a christian tutor were engaged to form the character of the young prince. He also protected from the popular indignation men and women of the highest rank in Rome—senators, their wives and families—who had embraced Christianity. But, alas, all this favour towards the Christians was merely the result of local circumstances. The laws remained the same, and violent persecutions broke out against them in particular provinces.

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PERSECUTIONS UNDER SEVERUS.
A.D. 202.

It was not till about the tenth year of his reign that the native ferocity of his dark and relentless mind was manifested against the Christians. In 202, after his return from the East, where he had gained great victories, and no doubt lifted up with pride, he put forth his hand and impiously dared to arrest the progress of Christianity—the chariot of the gospel. He passed a law which forbade, under severe penalties, that any of his subjects should become either Jews or Christians. This law, as a matter of course, kindled a severe persecution against young converts and Christians in general. It stimulated their enemies to all kinds of violence. Large sums of money were extorted from timid Christians by some of the venal governors as the price of peace. This practice, though yielded to by some for the sake of life and liberty, was strongly denounced by others. It was considered by the more zealous as degrading to Christianity, and an ignominious barter of the hopes and glories of martyrdom. Still the persecution does not appear to have been general. It left its deepest traces in *Egypt* and *Africa*.

At Alexandria, Leonides, father of the famous Origen, suffered martyrdom. Young people at schools, who were receiving a christian education, were subjected to severe tortures, and some of their teachers were seized and burned. The young Origen distinguished himself at this time by his active and fearless labours in the now almost deserted schools. He longed to follow in his father's footsteps, and rather sought than shunned the crown of martyrdom. But it was in Africa—a place we

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only think of now as a dark, miserable, and thinly peopled desert—that the *silver line* of God's marvellous grace was most distinctly marked in the heavenly patience and fortitude of the holy sufferers. We must indulge our readers with a few brief details.

THE PERSECUTION IN AFRICA.

Historians say, that in no part of the Roman Empire had Christianity taken more deep and permanent root than in the province of Africa. Then it was crowded with rich and populous cities. The African type of Christianity was entirely different to the Egyptian. The former was earnest and impassioned, the latter dreamy and speculative, through the evil influence of Platonism. Tertullian belongs to this period, and is a true type of the difference we have referred to ; but more of this further on. We will now notice some of the African martyrs.

PERPETUA AND HER COMPANIONS.

Amongst others who were apprehended and martyred in Africa during this persecution, Perpetua and her companions, in all histories, hold a distinguished place. The history of their martyrdom not only bears throughout the stamp of circumstantial truth, but abounds with the most exquisite touches of natural feeling and affection. Here we see the beautiful combination of the tenderest feelings and the strongest affections, which Christianity recognizes in all their rights, and makes even more profound and tender; but yet causes all to be sacrificed on the altar of entire devotedness to Him who died entirely devoted to us. "Who loved me," as appropriating faith says, "and gave himself for me." Galatians ii. 20.

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At Carthage, in the year 202, three young men, Revocatus, Saturnius, and Secundulus, and two young women, Perpetua and Felicitas, were arrested, all of them being still catechumens, or candidates for baptism and communion. Perpetua was of a good family, wealthy and noble, of liberal education, and honourably married. She was about twenty-two years of age, and was a mother, with her child at the breast. Her whole family seem to have been Christians except her aged father, who was still a pagan. Nothing is said of her husband. Her father was passionately fond of her, and greatly dreaded the disgrace that her sufferings for Christ would bring on his family. So that she had not only death in its most frightful form to struggle with, but every sacred tie of nature.

When she was first brought before her persecutors, her aged father came and urged her to recant and say she was not a Christian. "Father," she calmly replied, pointing to a vessel that lay on the ground, "can I call this vessel anything else than what it is?" "No," he replied. "Neither can I say to you anything else than that I am a Christian." A few days after this the young Christians were baptized. Though they were under guard they were not yet committed to prison. But shortly after this, they were thrown into the dungeon. "Then," she says, "I was tempted, I was terrified, for I had never been in such darkness before. Oh what a dreadful day! The excessive heat occasioned by the number of persons, the rough treatment of the soldiers, and, finally, anxiety for my child, made me miserable." The deacons, however, succeeded in purchasing for the christian prisoners a better apartment, where they were separated from the common criminals. Such advantages

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could usually be purchased from the venal overseers of prisons. Perpetua was now cheered by having her child brought to her. She placed it at her breast, and exclaimed, "Now this prison has become a palace to me!"

After a few days, there was a rumour that the prisoners were to be examined. The father hastened to his daughter in great distress of mind. "My daughter," he said, "pity my grey hairs, pity thy father, if I am still worthy to be called thy father. If I have brought thee up to this bloom of thy age, if I have preferred thee above all thy brothers, expose me not to such shame among men. Look upon thy child—thy son—who, if thou diest, cannot long survive thee. Let thy lofty spirit give way, lest thou plunge us all into ruin. For if thou diest thus, not one of us will ever have courage again to speak a free word." Whilst saying this, he kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, entreating her with terms of endearment, and many tears. But, though greatly moved and pained by the sight of her father, and his strong and tender affection for her, she was calm and firm, and felt chiefly concerned for the good of his soul. "My father's grey hairs," she said, "pained me, when I considered that he alone of my family would not rejoice in my martyrdom." "What shall happen," she said to him, "when I come before the tribunal, depends on the will of God; for we stand not in our own strength, but only by the power of God."

On the arrival of the decisive hour—the last day of their trial—an immense multitude was assembled. The aged father again appeared, that he might for the last time try his utmost to overcome the resolution of his daughter. On this occasion he brought her infant son

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in his arms, and stood before her. What a moment! what a spectacle! Her aged father, his grey hairs, her tender infant; to say nothing of his agonizing importunities: what an appeal to a daughter—to a young mother's heart! "Have pity on thy father's grey hairs," said the governor, "have pity on thy helpless child, offer sacrifice for the welfare of the Emperor." Thus she stood before the tribunal, before the assembled multitude, before the admiring myriads of heaven, before the frowning hosts of hell. But Perpetua was calm and firm. Like Abraham of old, the father of the faithful, her eye was not now on her son, but on the God of resurrection. Having commended her child to her mother and her brother, she answered the governor, and said, "That I cannot do." "Art thou a Christian?" he asked. "Yes," she replied, "I am a Christian." Her fate was now decided. They were all condemned to serve as a cruel sport for the people and the soldiers, in a fight with wild beasts, on the anniversary of young Geta's birthday. They returned to their dungeon, rejoicing that they were thus enabled to witness and suffer for Jesus' sake. The gaoler, Pudas, was converted by means of the tranquil behaviour of his prisoners.

When led forth into the amphitheatre, the martyrs were observed to have a peaceful and joyful appearance. According to a custom which prevailed in Carthage, the men should have been clothed in scarlet like the priests of Saturn, and the women in yellow as the priestesses of Ceres; but the prisoners protested against such a proceeding. "We have come here," they said, "of our own choice, that we may not suffer our freedom to be taken from us; we have given up our lives that we may not be forced to such abominations." The pagans ac-

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knowledged the justice of their demand, and yielded. After taking leave of each other with the mutual kiss of christian love, in the certain hope of soon meeting again, as "absent from the body and present with the Lord," they came forward to the scene of death in their simple attire. The voice of praise to God was heard by the spectators. Perpetua was singing a psalm. The men were exposed to lions, bears, and leopards; the women were tossed by a furious cow. But all were speedily released from their sufferings by the sword of the gladiator, and entered into the joy of their Lord.

The interesting narrative, which is here abridged, and said to have been written by Perpetua's own hand, breathes such an air of truth and reality as to have commanded the respect and confidence of all ages. But our main object in writing it for our readers is to present to them a living picture, in which many of the finest features of christian faith are beautifully blended with the warmest and tenderest christian feelings; and that we may learn, not to be complainers, but to endure all things for Christ's sake, that so His grace may shine, our faith triumph, and God be glorified.

A few years after these events, Severus turned his attention to Britain, where the Romans had been losing ground. The Emperor, being at the head of a very powerful army, drove back the independent natives of Caledonia, and regained the country south of the wall of Antoninus, but lost so many troops in the successive battles which he was obliged to fight, that he did not think proper to push his conquests beyond that boundary. Feeling at length his end approaching, he retired to York, where he soon afterwards expired, in the eighteenth year of his reign. A.D. 211.

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THE ALTERED POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY.

After the death of Septimius Severus—except during the short reign of Maximin—the church enjoyed a season of comparative peace till the reign of Decius, A.D. 249. But during the favourable reign of Alexander Severus, a considerable change took place in the relation of Christianity to society. He was through life under the influence of his mother, Mammæa, who is described by Eusebius as "a woman distinguished for her piety and religion." She sent for Origen, of whose fame she had heard much, and learnt from him something of the doctrines of the gospel. She was afterwards favourable to the Christians, but there is not much evidence that she was one herself.

Alexander was of a religious disposition. He had many Christians in his household; and bishops were admitted, even at the court, in a recognized official character. He frequently used the words of our Saviour, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (Luke vi. 31.) He had them inscribed on the walls of his palace and on other public buildings. But all religions were nearly the same to him, and on this principle he gave Christianity a place in his eclectic system.

THE FIRST PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES.

An important point in the history of the church, and one that proves its altered position in the Roman Empire, now comes before us for the first time. It was during the reign of this excellent prince that public buildings were first erected for the assemblies of Christians. A little circumstance connected with a piece

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of land in Rome shews the true spirit of the Emperor and the growing power and influence of Christians. This piece of land, which had been considered as a common, was selected by a congregation as a site for a church; but the Company of Victuallers contended that they had a prior claim. The case was judged by the Emperor. He awarded the land to the Christians, on the ground that it was better to devote it to the worship of God in any form than apply it to a profane and unworthy use.

Public buildings—christian churches, so-called—now began to rise in different parts of the empire, and to possess endowments in land. The heathen had never been able to understand why the Christians had neither temples nor altars. Their religious assemblies, up till this time, had been held in private. Even the Jew had his public synagogue, but where the Christians met was indicated by no separate and distinguished building. The private house, the catacombs, the cemetery of their dead, contained their peaceful congregations. Their privacy, which had often been in those troublous times their security, was now passing away. On the other hand, it must also be observed that their secrecy was often used against them. We have seen from the first, that the pagans could not understand a religion without a temple, and were easily persuaded that these private and mysterious meetings, which seemed to shun the light of day, were only for the worst of purposes.

The outward condition of Christianity was now changed—wonderfully changed—but, alas, not in favour of spiritual health and growth, as we shall soon see. There were now well-known edifices in which the Christians met, and the doors of which they could throw wide open to all mankind. Christianity was now recognized

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as one of the various forms of worship which the government did not prohibit. But the toleration of the Christians during this period rested only on the favourable disposition of Alexander. No change was made in the laws of the empire in favour of Christians, so that their time of peace was brought to a close by his death. A conspiracy was formed against him by the demoralized soldiery, who could not endure the discipline which he sought to restore; and the youthful Emperor was slain in his tent, in the twenty-ninth year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign.

THE LORD'S DEALINGS WITH THE CLERGY.

Scarcely had the new churches been built, and the bishops received at court, than the hand of the Lord was turned against them. It happened in this way.

MAXIMIN, a rude Thracian peasant, raised himself to the imperial throne. He had been the chief instigator, if not the actual murderer of the virtuous Alexander. He began his reign by seizing and putting to death all the friends of the late Emperor. Those who had been *his* friends he reckoned as his own enemies. He ordered the bishops, and particularly those who had been the intimate friends of Alexander, to be put to death. His vengeance fell more or less on all classes of Christians, but chiefly on the clergy. It was not however for their Christianity that they suffered on this occasion, for Maximin was utterly regardless of all religions, but because of the position they had reached in the world. What can be more sorrowful than this reflection?

About the same time destructive earthquakes in several provinces rekindled the popular hatred against the Chris-

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tians in general. The fury of the people under such an emperor was unrestrained, and, encouraged by hostile governors, they burnt the newly-built churches and persecuted the Christians. But happily the reign of the savage was of short duration. He became intolerable to mankind. The army mutinied and slew him in the third year of his reign; and a more favourable season for the Christians returned.

The reign of GORDIAN, A.D. 238–244, and that of PHILIP, A.D. 244–249, were friendly to the church. But we have repeatedly found that a government favourable to the Christians was immediately followed by another which oppressed them. It was particularly the case at this time. Under the smiles and patronage of Philip, the Arabian, the church enjoyed great outward prosperity, but she was on the eve of a persecution more terrible and more general than any she had yet passed through.

One of the causes which may have contributed to this was the absence of the Christians from the national ceremonies which commemorated *the thousandth year of Rome*, A.D. 247. The secular games were celebrated with unexampled magnificence by Philip; but as he was favourable to the Christians, they escaped the fury of the pagan priests and populace. The Christians were now a recognized body in the State, and however carefully they might avoid mingling in the political factions or the popular festivities of the empire, they were considered the enemies of her prosperity and the cause of all her calamities. We now come to a complete change of government—a government that afflicts the whole church of God.

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THE GENERAL PERSECUTION UNDER DECIUS.

DECIUS, in the year 249, conquered Philip and placed himself on the throne. His reign is remarkable in church history for the first *general* persecution. The new Emperor was unfavourable to Christianity and zealously devoted to the pagan religion. He resolved to attempt the complete extermination of the former, and to restore the latter to its ancient glory. One of the first measures of his reign was to issue edicts to the governors, to enforce the ancient laws against the Christians. They were commanded, on pain of forfeiting their own lives, to exterminate all Christians utterly, or bring them back by pains and tortures to the religion of their fathers.

From the time of Trajan there had been an imperial order to the effect, that *the Christians were not to be sought for;* and there was also a law against private accusations being brought against them, especially by their own servants, as we have seen in the case of Apollonius; and these laws had been usually observed by the enemies of the church, but now they were wholly neglected. The authorities sought out the Christians, the accusers ran no risk, and popular clamour was admitted in place of formal evidence. During the two succeeding years a great multitude of Christians in all the Roman provinces were banished, imprisoned, or tortured to death by various kinds of punishments and sufferings. This persecution was more cruel and terrible than any that preceded it. But the most painful part of those heart-rending scenes was the enfeebled state of the Christians themselves—the sad effect of worldly ease and prosperity.

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THE EFFECTS OF WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH.

The student of church history now meets with the manifest and appalling effect of the world in the church. It is a most sorrowful sight, but it ought to be a profitable lesson to the christian reader. What then was, is now, and ever must be. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, is not now less sensitive to the foul and withering breath of the world than He was then.

What the enemy could not do by bloody edicts and cruel tyrants, he accomplished by the friendship of the world. This is an old stratagem of Satan. The wily serpent proved more dangerous than the roaring lion. By means of the favour of great men, and especially of emperors, he threw the clergy off their guard, led them to join hands with the world, and deceived them by his flatteries. The Christians could now erect temples as well as the heathen, and their bishops were received at the imperial court on equal terms with the idolatrous priests. This unhallowed intercourse with the world sapped the very foundations of their Christianity. This became painfully manifest when the violent storm of persecution succeeded the long calm of their worldly prosperity.

In many parts of the empire the Christians had enjoyed undisturbed peace for a period of thirty years. This had told unfavourably on the church as a whole. With many, it was not now the faith of an ardent conviction such as we had in the first and second centuries; but of truth instilled into the mind by means of christian education—just what prevails in the present day to an alarming extent. A persecution breaking out with great violence, after so many years of tranquillity, could not

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fail to prove a sifting process for the churches. The atmosphere of Christianity had become corrupted. Cyprian in the West, and Origen in the East, speak of the secular spirit which had crept in—of the pride, the luxury, the covetousness of the clergy, of the careless and irreligious lives of the people.

"If," says Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, "the cause of the disease is understood, the cure of the affected part is already found. The Lord would prove His people; and because the divinely-prescribed regimen of life had become disturbed in the long season of peace, a divine judgment was sent to re-establish our fallen, and, I might almost say, slumbering faith. Our sins deserve more; but our gracious Lord has so ordered it that all which has occurred seems rather like a trial than a persecution. Forgetting what believers did in the times of the apostles, and what they should always be doing, Christians laboured with insatiable desire, to increase their earthly possessions. Many of the bishops who, by precept and example, should have guided others, neglected their divine calling to engage in the management of worldly concerns." Such being the condition of things in many of the churches, we need not wonder at what took place.

The Emperor ordered rigorous search to be made for all suspected of refusing compliance with the national worship. Christians were required to conform to the ceremonies of the pagan religion. In case they declined, threats, and afterwards tortures, were to be employed to compel submission. If they remained firm, the punishment of death was to be inflicted, especially on the bishops, whom Decius hated most bitterly. The custom was, wherever the dreadful edict was carried into

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execution, to appoint a day when all the Christians in the place were to present themselves before the magistrate, renounce their religion, and offer incense at the idol's altar. Many, before the fearful day arrived, had fled into voluntary banishment. The goods of such were confiscated and themselves forbidden to return under penalty of death. Those who remained firm, after repeated tortures, were cast into prison, when the additional sufferings of hunger and thirst were employed to overcome their resolution. Many who were less firm and faithful were let off without sacrificing, by purchasing themselves, or allowing their friends to purchase, a certificate from the magistrate. But this unworthy practice was condemned by the church as a tacit abjuration.

DIONYSIUS, bishop of Alexandria, in describing the effect of this terrible decree, says, "that many citizens of repute complied with the edict. Some were impelled by their fears and some were forced by their friends. Many stood pale and trembling, neither ready to submit to the idolatrous ceremony, nor prepared to resist even unto death. Others endured their tortures to a certain point, but finally gave in." Such were some of the painful and disgraceful effects of the general relaxation through tampering with this present evil world; still it would ill become us, who live in a time of great civil and religious liberty, to say hard things of the weakness of those who lived in such sanguinary times. Rather let us feel the disgrace as our own, and pray that we may be kept from yielding to the attractions of the world in every form. But all was not defective, thank the Lord. Let us look for a moment at the bright side.

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THE POWER OF FAITH AND CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.

The same Dionysius tells us that many were as pillars of the Lord, who through Him were made strong, and became wonderful witnesses of His grace. Among these he mentions a boy of fifteen, Dioscurus by name, who answered in the wisest manner all questions, and displayed such constancy under torture that he commanded the admiration of the governor himself, who dismissed him in the hope that riper years would lead him to see his error. A woman, who had been brought to the altar by her husband, was forced to offer incense by some one holding her hand; but she exclaimed, "I did it not: it was you that did it;" and she was thereupon condemned to exile. In the dungeon at Carthage the Christians were exposed to heat, hunger, and thirst, in order to force them to comply with the decree; but although they saw death by starvation staring them in the face, they continued stedfast in their confession of Christ. And from the prison in Rome, where certain confessors had been confined for about a year, the following noble confession was sent to Cyprian: "What more glorious and blessed lot can, by God's grace, fall to man than, amidst tortures and the fear of death itself, to confess God the Lord—than, with lacerated bodies and a spirit departing but yet free, to confess Christ the Son of God—than to become fellow-sufferers with Christ in the name of Christ? If we have not yet shed our blood, we are ready to shed it. Pray then, beloved Cyprian, that the Lord would daily confirm and strengthen each one of us, more and more, with the power of His might, and that He, as the best of leaders, would finally conduct His soldiers, whom He has disciplined and proved in the

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dangerous camp, to the field of battle which is before us, armed with those divine weapons which never can be conquered."

Among the victims of this terrible persecution were Fabian, bishop of Rome, Babylas of Antioch, and Alexander of Jerusalem. Cyprian, Origen, Gregory, Dionysius, and other eminent men, were exposed to cruel tortures and exile, but escaped with their lives. The hatred of the Emperor was particularly directed against the bishops. But in the Lord's mercy the reign of Decius was a short one; he was killed in battle with the Goths, about the end of 251.*

THE MARTYRDOM OF CYPRIAN UNDER VALERIAN.

As the name of *Cyprian* must be familiar to all our readers, and a name most famous in connection with the government and discipline of the church, it may be well to notice particularly the serene fortitude of this Father in the prospect of martyrdom.

He was born at Carthage about the year 200; but he was not converted till about 246. Though in mature age, he possessed all the freshness and ardour of youth. He had been distinguished as a teacher of rhetoric, he was now distinguished as an earnest, devoted Christian. He was early promoted to the offices of deacon and presbyter; and in 248 he was elected bishop by the general desire of the people. His labours were interrupted by the persecution under Decius; but his life was preserved till the year 258. On the morning of the 13th of September, an officer with soldiers were sent by the pro-

* See Neander, vol. i., p. 177; Mosheim, vol. i., p. 217; Milner, vol. i., p. 332.

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consul to bring him into his presence. Cyprian then knew his end was near. With a ready mind and a cheerful countenance he went without delay. His trial was postponed for a day. The intelligence of his apprehension drew together the whole city. His own people lay all night in front of the officer's house with whom he was lodged.

In the morning he was led to the proconsul's palace, surrounded by a great multitude of people and a strong guard of soldiers. After a short delay, the proconsul appeared. "Art thou Thascius Cyprian, the bishop of so many impious men?" said the proconsul. "I am," answered Cyprian. "The most sacred Emperor commands thee to sacrifice." "I do not sacrifice," he replied. "Consider well," rejoined the proconsul. "Execute thy orders," answered Cyprian, "the case admits of no consideration."

The governor consulted with his council, and then delivered his sentence. "Thascius Cyprian, thou hast lived long in thy impiety, and assembled around thee many men involved in the same wicked conspiracy. Thou hast shewn thyself an enemy alike to the gods and to the laws of the empire; the pious and sacred emperors have in vain endeavoured to recall thee to the worship of thy ancestors. Since then thou hast been the chief author and leader of these guilty practices, thou shalt be an example to those whom thou hast deluded to thy unlawful assemblies. Thou must expiate thy crime with thy blood." "God be praised!" answered Cyprian; and the crowd of his brethren exclaimed, "Let us too be martyred with him." The bishop was carried into a neighbouring field and beheaded. It was remarkable that but a few days afterwards the proconsul died. And

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the Emperor Valerian, the following year, was defeated and taken prisoner by the Persians, who treated him with great and contemptuous cruelty—a calamity and disgrace without example in the annals of Rome.

The miserable death of many of the persecutors made a great impression on the public mind, and forced on many the conviction, that the enemies of Christianity were the enemies of heaven. For about forty years after this outrage, the peace and prosperity of the church were not seriously interrupted; so that we may pass over these years for the present, and come to the final contest between paganism and Christianity.

THE GENERAL STATE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Before attempting a brief account of the persecution under Diocletian, it may be well to review the history and condition of the church, as the final struggle drew near. But in order to form a correct judgment of the progress and state of Christianity at the end of three hundred years, we must consider the power of the enemies with which it had to contend.

1. JUDAISM. We have seen at some length, and especially in the life of St. Paul, that *Judaism* was the first great enemy of Christianity. It had to contend from its infancy with the strong prejudices of the believing, and with the bitter malice of the unbelieving, Jews. In its native region, and wherever it travelled, it was pursued by its unrelenting foe. And after the death of the apostles, the church suffered much from yielding to Jewish pressure, and ultimately remodelling Christianity on the system of Judaism. The new wine was put into old bottles.

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2. ORIENTALISM. Towards the close of the first and the beginning of the second century, Christianity had to wend its way through the many and conflicting elements of eastern philosophy. Its first conflict was with *Simon Magus*, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Though a Samaritan by birth, he is supposed to have studied the various religions of the East at Alexandria. On returning to his native country, he advanced very high pretensions to superior knowledge and power; and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." From this notice of Simon we may learn what influence such men had over the minds of the ignorant and the superstitious, and also, what a dreadful power of Satan the early church had to contend with in these evil workers. He assumed not merely the lofty title of "the great power of God," but that he combined in himself the other perfections of Deity. He is spoken of by writers generally as the head and father of the whole host of impostors and heretics.

After being so openly and shamefully defeated by Peter, he is said to have left Samaria, and travelled through various countries, choosing especially those which the gospel had not reached. From this time he introduced the name of Christ into his system, and so endeavoured to confound the gospel with his blasphemies, and confuse the minds of the people. As to his miracle and magic working, his marvellous theories about his own descent from heaven, and other emanations, we say nothing, only that they proved, especially in the east, a mighty hindrance to the progress of the gospel.

The successors of Simon, such as Cerinthus and

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Valentinus, so systematized his theories as to become the founders of that form of gnosticism with which the church had to contend in the second century. The name implies *pretensions to some superior knowledge.* It is generally thought that St. Paul refers to this meaning of the word when warning his son Timothy against "science," or *knowledge* "falsely so called."

Although it would be out of place in these "Short Papers" to attempt anything like an outline of this widespread orientalism or gnosticism, yet we must give our readers some idea of what it was. It proved for a time the most formidable opponent of Christianity. But as the facts and doctrines of the gospel prevailed, gnosticism declined.

Under the head of the *gnostics* may be included all those in the first ages of the church, who incorporated into their philosophical systems the most obvious and suitable doctrines of both Judaism and Christianity. Thus *gnosticism* became a mixture of oriental philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. By means of this Satanic confusion the beautiful simplicity of the gospel was destroyed, and for a long time, in many places, its real character was obscured. It was a deep-laid plan and a mighty effort of the enemy, not only to corrupt, but to undermine and subvert the gospel altogether. No sooner had Christianity appeared than the gnostics began to adopt into their systems some of its sublimest doctrines. Judaism was deeply tinged with it before the christian era: probably from the captivity.

But gnosticism, we must remember, was not a corruption of Christianity, though the whole school of gnostics are called *heretics* by ecclesiastical writers. As to its origin, we must go back to the many religions of the

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East, such as Chaldean, Persian, Egyptian, and others. In our own day such philosophers would be viewed as infidels and utter aliens from the gospel of Christ; but in early times the title *heretic* was given to all who in any way whatever introduced the name of Christ into their philosophical systems. Hence it has been said, "If Mahomet had appeared in the second century, Justin Martyr, or Irenæus would have spoken of him as a heretic." At the same time we must own that the principles of the Greek philosophy, especially the Platonic, forced their way at a very early period into the church, corrupted the pure stream of truth, and threatened for a time to change the design and the effects of the gospel upon mankind.

ORIGEN, who was born at Alexandria—the cradle of gnosticism—about the year 185, was the Father who gave form and completeness to the Alexandrian method of interpreting scripture. He distinguished in it a threefold sense—the literal, the moral, and the mystical—answering respectively to the body, soul, and spirit in man. The literal sense, he held, might be understood by any attentive reader; the moral required higher intelligence; the mystical was only to be apprehended through the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was to be obtained by prayer.

It was the great object of this eminent teacher to harmonize Christianity with philosophy; this was the leaven of the Alexandrian school. He sought to gather up the fragments of truth scattered throughout other systems, and unite them in a christian scheme, so as to present the gospel in a form that would not offend the prejudices but insure the conversion of Jews, gnostics, and of cultivated

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heathens. These principles of interpretation, and this combination of Christianity with philosophy, led Origen and his followers into many grave and serious errors, both practical and doctrinal. He was a devoted, earnest, zealous Christian himself, and truly loved the Lord Jesus; but the tendency of his principles has been, from that day to this, to weaken faith in the definite character of truth, if not to pervert it altogether by means of spiritualizing and allegorizing, which his system taught and allowed.

THE MALIGNITY OF MATTER was a first principle in all the sects of the gnostics; it pervaded all the religious systems of the East. This led to the wildest theories as to the formation and character of the material universe, and all corporeal substances. Thus it was, that persons believing their bodies to be intrinsically evil, recommended abstinence and severe bodily mortifications, in order that the mind or spirit, which was viewed as pure and divine, might enjoy greater liberty, and be able the better to contemplate heavenly things. Without saying more on this subject—which we do not much enjoy—the reader will see that the celibacy of the clergy in later years, and the whole system of asceticism and monasticism, had their origin, not in the scriptures, but in oriental philosophy.*

PAGANISM.—Not only had the church to contend with Judaism and Orientalism, it also suffered from the out-

* For minute details of the different sects, see *Dictionary of Christian Churches and Sects*, by Marsden. Robertson, vol. i. 94. Neander, vol. ii. 387. Milman, vol. ii. 80. Mosheim, vol. i. 117.

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ward hostility of *Paganism*. These were the three formidable powers of Satan with which he assailed the church during the first three hundred years of her history. In carrying out her Lord's high commission—"Teach all nations .... preach the gospel to every creature"—she had these enemies to face and overcome. But these could not have hindered her course had she only walked in separation from the world, and remained true and faithful to her heavenly and exalted Saviour. But alas, alas, what Judaism, Orientalism, and Paganism could not do, the allurements of the world accomplished. And this leads us to a close survey of the condition of the church when the great persecution broke out.

A SURVEY OF THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH. A.D. 303.

Diocletian ascended the throne in 284. In 286 he associated with himself Maximian, as Augustus; and in 292 Galerius and Constantius were added to the number of the princes, with the inferior title of Cæsar. Thus; when the fourth century began, the Roman empire had four sovereigns. Two bore the title of Augustus; and two the title of Cæsar. Diocletian, though superstitious, indulged no hatred towards Christians. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, was friendly to them. At first, the face of christian affairs looked tolerably bright and happy; but the pagan priests were angry and plotting mischief against the Christians. They saw in the wide-spreading triumphs of Christianity their own downfall. For fully fifty years the church had been very little disturbed by the secular power. During this period Christians had attained an unexampled degree of prosperity; but it was only outward; they had deeply

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declined from the purity and simplicity of the gospel of Christ.

Churches had arisen in most of the cities of the empire, and with some display of architectural splendour. Vestments and sacred vessels of silver and gold began to be used. Converts flocked in from all ranks of society; even the wife of the emperor, and his daughter Valeria, married to Galerius, appear to have been among the number. Christians held high offices in the state, and in the imperial household. They occupied positions of distinction and even of supreme authority, in the provinces and in the army. But, alas, this long period of outward prosperity had produced its usual consequences. Faith and love decayed; pride and ambition crept in. Priestly domination began to exercise its usurped powers, and the bishop to assume the language and the authority of the vicegerent of God. Jealousies and dissensions distracted the peaceful communities, and disputes sometimes proceeded to open violence. The peace of fifty years had corrupted the whole christian atmosphere: the lightning of Diocletian's rage was permitted of God to refine and purify it.

Such is the melancholy confession of the Christians themselves, who, according to the spirit of the times, considered the dangers and the afflictions to which they were exposed in the light of divine judgments.*

THE ACTS OF DIOCLETIAN AND THE CLOSE OF THE SMYRNEAN PERIOD.

Already the church has passed through nine systematic persecutions. The first was under Nero, then Do-

* Milman, vol. ii. 261.

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mitian, Trajan, Marcus, Severus, Maximin, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian. And now the fearful moment has arrived when she must undergo the TENTH, according to the prophetic word of the Lord: "Ye shall have tribulation TEN days." And it is not a little remarkable that not only should there be exactly *ten* government persecutions, but that the last should have continued exactly TEN years. And, as we saw at an earlier part of the Smyrnean period, exactly TEN years elapsed from the beginning of the persecution, under Marcus, in the East, till its close in the West. The christian student may trace other features of resemblance: we would rather *suggest* such features than *press* their acceptance upon others, though we surely believe they are foreshadowed in the Epistle to Smyrna.

The reign of Diocletian is one of great historical importance. First, it was rendered conspicuous by the introduction of a new system of imperial government. He virtually removed the capital from ancient Rome to Nicomedia, which he made the seat of his residence. There he maintained a court of eastern splendour, to which he invited men of learning and philosophy. But the philosophers who frequented his court, being all animated with extreme hatred against Christianity, used their influence with the Emperor to exterminate a religion too pure to suit their polluted minds. This led to the last and greatest persecution of the Christians. It is only with the latter we have to do. And as all histories of this period are gathered chiefly from the records of Eusebius and Lactantius, who wrote at this time and witnessed many executions, we can do little more than select and transcribe from what has been already written, consulting the various authors already named.

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The pagan priests and philosophers above referred to, not succeeding well in their artifices with Diocletian to make war with the Christians, made use of the other emperor, Galerius, his son-in-law, to accomplish their purpose. This cruel man, impelled partly by his own inclination and partly by his mother, a most superstitious pagan, and partly by the priests, gave his father-in-law no rest until he had gained his point.

During the winter of the year 302–303, Galerius paid a visit to Diocletian at Nicomedia. His great object was to excite the old Emperor against the Christians. Diocletian for a time withstood his importunity. He was averse, from whatever motive, to the sanguinary measures proposed by his partner. But the mother of Galerius, the implacable enemy of the Christians, employed all her influence over her son to inflame his mind to immediate and active hostilities. Diocletian at length gave way, and a persecution was agreed to: but the lives of the Christians were to be spared. Previously to this, Galerius had taken care to remove from the army all who refused to sacrifice. Some were discharged and some were sentenced to death.

THE FIRST EDICT.

About the 24th of February the *first* edict was issued. It ordained that all who refused to sacrifice should lose their offices, their property, their rank, and civil privileges; that slaves persisting in the profession of the gospel should be excluded from the hope of liberty; that Christians of all ranks should be liable to torture; that all churches should be destroyed; that religious meetings should be suppressed; and that the scriptures should be burnt. The attempt to exterminate the scriptures was a

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new feature in this persecution, and no doubt was suggested by the philosophers who frequented the palace. They were well aware that their own writings would have but little hold on the public mind if the scriptures and other sacred books were circulated. Immediately these measures were resolved upon, the church of Nicomedia was attacked, the sacred books were burnt, and the building entirely demolished in a few hours. Throughout the empire the churches of the Christians were to be levelled to the ground, and the sacred books were to be delivered to the imperial officers. Many Christians who refused to give up the scriptures were put to death, while those who gave them up to be burnt were considered by the church as traitors to Christ, and afterwards caused great trouble in the exercise of discipline towards them.*

No sooner had this cruel edict been affixed in the accustomed place, than a Christian of noble rank tore it down. His indignation at injustice so flagrant hurried him into an act of inconsiderate zeal—into a violation of that precept of the gospel which enjoins respect towards all in authority. Welcome was the occasion thus furnished to condemn a Christian of high station to death. He was burnt alive at a slow fire, and bore his sufferings with a dignified composure which astonished and morti-

* It may interest the reader to know that no MSS of the New Testament are extant older than the middle of the fourth century. One fact which accounts for this in great measure is the destruction of the christian writings, the scriptures especially, in the reign of Diocletian during the earlier part of that century. Under Constantine it is known that special efforts were made to have correct copies made, of which the celebrated critic Tischendorf believes the Sinai MS to be one.

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fied his executioners. The persecution was now begun. The first step against the Christians having been taken, the second did not linger.

Not long after the publication of the edict, a fire broke out in the palace of Nicomedia, which spread almost to the chamber of the Emperor. The origin of the fire appears to be unknown; but, of course, the guilt was charged on the Christians. Diocletian believed it. He was alarmed and incensed. Multitudes were thrown into prison, without discrimination of those who were or were not liable to suspicion, the most cruel tortures were resorted to, for the purpose of extorting a confession; but in vain. Many were burnt to death, beheaded, and drowned. About fourteen days after, a second fire broke out in the palace. It now become evident that it was the work of an incendiary. The heathen again accused the Christians, and loudly cried for vengeance; but as no proof could ever be found that the Christians had any hand in any way in these fatal conflagrations, a strong, and, we believe, truthful suspicion rested on the Emperor Galerius himself. His great object from the first was to criminate the Christians, and alarm Diocletian by his own more violent measures. As if fully aware of the effect of these events on the dark, timid, and superstitious mind of the old Emperor, he immediately left Nicomedia, pretending that he could not consider his person safe within the city.

But the end was gained; and that to the utmost extent which even Galerius or his pagan mother could have desired. Diocletian, now thoroughly aroused, raged ferociously against all sorts of men and women who bore the christian name. He compelled his wife Prisca, and his daughter Valeria, to offer sacrifice. Officers of the

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household, of the highest rank and nobility, and all the inmates of the palace, were exposed to the most cruel tortures, by the order, and even in the presence of, Diocletian himself. The names of some of his ministers of state have been handed down, who preferred the reproach of Christ to all the grandeur of his palace. One of the chamberlains was brought before the Emperor, and was tortured with great severity, because he refused to sacrifice. As if to make an example of him to the others, a mixture of salt and vinegar was poured on his open wounds, but it was all to no purpose. He confessed his faith in Christ as the only Saviour, and would own no other God. He was then gradually burnt to death. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and Andreas, eunuchs, who served in the palace, were put to death. Anthimus, the bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded. Many were executed, many were burnt alive; but it became tedious to destroy men singly; and large fires were made to burn many together; others were rowed into the midst of the lake, and thrown into the water with stones fastened to their necks.

From Nicomedia, the centre of the persecution, the imperial orders were despatched, requiring the co-operation of the other emperors in the restoration of the dignity of the ancient religion, and the entire suppression of Christianity. Thus the persecution raged throughout the whole Roman world, excepting Gaul. There, the mild Constantius ruled, and, though he made a show of concurring in the measure of his colleagues, by the demolition of the churches, he abstained from all violence against the persons of the Christians. Though not himself a decided Christian, he was naturally humane, and evidently a friend to Christianity and its professors.

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He presided over the government of Gaul, Britain, and Spain. But the fierce temper of Maximian, and the savage cruelty of Galerius, only awaited the signal to carry into effect the orders from Nicomedia. And now the three monsters raged, in the full force of the civil power, against the defenceless and unoffending followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

"Grace begun shall end in glory;
Jesus, He the victory won;
In His own triumphant story
Is the record of our own."

THE SECOND EDICT.

Not long after the first edict had been carried into execution throughout the empire, rumours of insurrections in Armenia and Syria, regions densely peopled with Christians, reached the Emperor's ears. These troubles were falsely attributed to the Christians, and afforded a pretext for a second edict. It was intimated that the clergy, as leaders of the Christians, were particularly liable to suspicion on this occasion, and the edict directed that all of the clerical order should be seized and thrown into prison. Thus in a short time prisons were filled with bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

THE THIRD EDICT.

A third edict was immediately issued, prohibiting the liberation of any of the clergy, unless they consented to offer sacrifice. They were declared enemies of the State; and wherever a hostile prefect chose to exercise his boundless authority, they were crowded into prisons intended only for the basest criminals. The edict provided that such of the prisoners as were willing to offer sacri-

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fice to the gods should be set free, and that the rest should be compelled by tortures and punishments. Great multitudes of the most devout, godly, and venerable in the church, either suffered capitally, or were sent to the mines. The Empèror vainly thought that if the bishops and teachers were once overcome, the churches would soon follow their example. But finding that the most humiliating defeat was the result of his measures, he was goaded on by the united influence of Galerius, the philosophers, and the pagan priesthood, to issue another and a still more rigorous edict.

THE FOURTH EDICT.

By a fourth edict, the orders which applied only to the clergy were now to be extended to the whole body of Christians. The magistrates were directed to make free use of torture for forcing *all* Christians—men, women, and children—into the worship of the gods. Diocletian and his colleagues were now committed to the desperate, but unequal contest. The powers of darkness—the whole Roman empire—stood, *armed*, determined, pledged, to the defence of ancient polytheism, and to the complete extermination of the christian name. To retreat, would be the confession of weakness; to be successful, the adversary must be exterminated: as to victory, there could be none, for the Christians made no resistance. Historically, it was the final and fearful struggle between paganism and Christianity; the contest was now at its height and drawing to a crisis.

Public proclamation was made through the streets of the cities, that men, women, and children, were all to repair to the temples of the gods. All must undergo the fiery ordeal—sacrifice or die. Every individual was

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summoned by name from lists previously made out. At the city gates all were subjected to rigid examination, and such as were found to be Christians were immediately secured.

Details of the sufferings and martyrdoms that followed would fill volumes. As edict followed edict, in rapid succession and in wrathful severity, the spirit of martyrdom revived; it rose higher and higher, until men and women, in place of being seized and dragged to the funeral piles, leaped into the burning flames as if ascending to heaven in a chariot of fire. Whole families were put to various kinds of death; some by fire, others by water, after enduring severe tortures; some perished by famine, others by crucifixion; and some were fastened with their heads downwards, and preserved alive, that they might die a lingering death. In some places, as many as ten, twenty, sixty, and even a hundred men and women with their little ones, were martyred by various torments, in one day.*

In almost every part of the Roman world such scenes of pitiless barbarity continued with more or less severity, for the long period of ten years. Constantius alone, of all the emperors, contrived to shelter the Christians in the west, especially in Gaul where he resided. But in all other places they were given up to all sorts of cruelties and injuries, without the liberty to appeal to the authorities, and without the smallest protection from the State. Free leave was given to the heathen populace to practise all sorts of excesses against the Christians. Under these circumstances the reader may easily imagine what they

* For the names and particulars of many of the sufferers, see Milner, vol. i., pp. 473—506.

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were constantly exposed to, both in their persons and estates. Each one felt sure of never being called to account for any violence he might be guilty of towards the Christians. But the sufferings of the men, however great, seemed little compared with the women. The fear of exposure and violence was more dreaded than mere death.

Take one example. "A certain holy and devout female," says Eusebius, "admirable for her virtue and illustrious above all in Antioch for her wealth, family, and reputation, had educated her two daughters—now in the bloom of life, noted for their beauty—in the principles of piety. Their concealment was traced, and they were caught in the toils of the soldiery. The mother, being at a loss for herself and her daughters, knowing what was before them, suggested that it was better to die, betaking themselves to the aid of Christ, than fall into the hands of the brutal soldiers. After this, all agreeing to the same thing, and having requested the guards for a little time, they cast themselves into the flowing river, to escape a greater evil." Although this act cannot be fully justified, it must be judged with many considerations. They were driven to despair. And sure we are that the Lord knows how to forgive all that is wrong in the action, and to give us full credit for all that is right in our motives.

For a moment the persecutors vainly imagined that they would triumph over the downfall of Christianity. Pillars were raised, and medals were struck, to the honour of Diocletian and Galerius, for having extinguished the christian superstition, and for restoring the worship of the gods. But He who sits in heaven was at that very moment overruling the very wrath of these

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men for the complete deliverance and triumph of His people, and the acknowledged defeat and downfall of their enemies. They could martyr Christians, demolish churches, and burn books; but the living springs of Christianity were beyond their reach.

THE HAND OF THE LORD IN JUDGMENT.

Great and important changes began to take place in the sovereignty of the empire. But the Head of the church watched over everything. He had limited and defined the period of her sufferings, and neither the hosts of hell, nor the legions of Rome, could extend these one hour. The enemies of the Christians were smittten with the direst calamities. God appeared to be making requisition for blood. Galerius, the real author of the persecution, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and the eighth of the persecution, lay expiring of a most loathsome malady. Like Herod the Great, and Philip II. of Spain, he was "eaten of worms." Physicians were sought for, oracles were consulted, but all in vain; the remedies applied only aggravated the virulence of the disease. The whole palace was so infected from the nature of his affliction, that he was deserted by all his friends. The agonies which he suffered forced from him the cry for mercy; and also an earnest request to the Christians to intercede for the suffering Emperor in their supplications to their God.

From his dying bed he issued an edict; which, while it condescended to apologise for the past severities against the Christians, under the specious plea of regard for the public welfare and unity of the state, admitted to the fullest extent the total failure of the severe measures for the suppression of Christianity; and provided for the

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free and public exercise of the christian religion. A few days after the promulgation of the edict Galerius expired. For about six months the merciful orders of this edict were acted upon, and great numbers were liberated from the prisons and the mines; but, alas, bearing the marks of bodily torture only short of death. This brief cessation of the persecution shewed at once its fearful character and alarming extent.

But Maximin, who succeeded Galerius in the government of Asia, sought to revive the pagan religion in all its original splendour, and the suppression of Christianity, with renewed and relentless cruelty. He commanded that all the officers of his government, from the highest to the lowest, both in the civil and military service; that all free men and women, all slaves, and even little children, should sacrifice, and even partake of what was offered at heathen altars. All vegetables and provisions in the market were to be sprinkled with the water or the wine which had been used in the sacrifices, that the Christians might thus be forced into contact with idolatrous offerings.

New tortures were invented, and fresh streams of christian blood flowed in all the provinces of the Roman empire, with the exception of Gaul. But the hand of the Lord was again laid heavily both on the empire and on the Emperor. Every kind of calamity prevailed. Tyranny, war, pestilence, and famine, depopulated the Asiatic provinces. Throughout the dominions of Maximin the summer rains did not fall; a famine desolated the whole East; many opulent families were reduced to beggary, and others sold their children as slaves. The famine produced its usual accompaniment, pestilence. Boils broke out all over the bodies of those who were

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seized with the malady, but especially about the eyes, so that multitudes became helplessly and incurably blind. All hearts failed, and all who were able fled from the infected houses; so that myriads were left to perish in a state of absolute desertion. The Christians, moved by the love of God in their hearts, now came forward to do the kind offices of humanity and mercy. They attended the living and decently buried the dead. Fear fell upon all mankind. The heathen concluded their calamities to be the vengeance of heaven for persecuting its favoured people.

Maximin was alarmed, and endeavoured, when too late, to retrace his steps. He issued an edict, avowing the principles of toleration, and commanding the suspension of all violent measures against the Christians, and recommending only mild and persuasive means to win back these apostates to the religion of their forefathers. Having been defeated in battle by Licinius, he turned his rage against the pagan priests. He charged them with having deceived him with false hopes of victory over Licinius and of universal empire in the East, and now revenged his disappointment by a promiscuous massacre of all the pagan priests within his power. His last imperial act was the promulgation of another edict, still more favourable to the Christians, in which he proclaimed an unrestricted liberty of conscience, and restored the confiscated property of their churches. But death came and closed the dark catalogue of his crimes, and the dark line of persecuting emperors, who died of the most excruciating torments and under the visible hand of divine judgment. Many names, of great celebrity both for station and character, are among the martyrs of this period; and many thousands, unknown and unnoticed

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on earth, but whose record is on high and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Thus closed the most memorable of all the attacks of the powers of darkness on the christian church, and thus closed the last hope of paganism to maintain itself by the authority of the government. The account of the most violent, most varied, most prolonged, and most systematic attempt to exterminate the gospel ever known, well deserves the space we have given to it, so that we offer no apology for its length. We have seen the arm of the Lord lifted up in a gracious but solemn manner to chastise and purify His church, to demonstrate the imperishable truth of Christianity, and to cover with everlasting shame and confusion her daring but impotent foes. Like Moses we may exclaim, "Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." Thus we see why the bush was not burned, or Israel in Egypt not consumed, or the church in this world not exterminated: God was in the midst of the bush—He is in the midst of His church—it is the habitation of God through the Spirit. Besides, Christ hath plainly said, referring to Himself in His risen power and glory, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Exodus iii.; Matthew xvi.

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CHAPTER X.

CONSTANTINE.

THE reign of Constantine the Great forms a most important epoch in the history of the church. Both his father Constantius, and his mother Helena, were religiously inclined, and always favourable to the Christians. Some years of Constantine's youth were spent at the court of Diocletian and Galerius, in the character of a hostage. He witnessed the publication of the persecuting edict at Nicomedia in 303, and the horrors which followed. Having effected his escape, he joined his father in Britain. In 306 Constantius died at York. He had nominated as successor, his son Constantine, who was accordingly saluted *Augustus* by the army. He continued and extended the toleration which his father had bestowed on the Christians.

There were now six pretenders to the sovereignty of the empire. Galerius, Licinius, Maximian, Maxentius, Maximin, and Constantine. A scene of contention followed, scarcely paralleled in the annals of Rome. Among these rivals, Constantine possessed a decided superiority in prudence and abilities, both military and political. In the year 312 Constantine entered Rome victorious. In 313 a new edict was issued, by which the persecuting edicts of Diocletian were repealed, the Christians encouraged, their teachers honoured, and the professors of Christianity advanced to places of trust and

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influence in the state. This great change in the history of the church introduces us to

THE PERGAMOS PERIOD.
A.D. 313–606.

The Epistle to the church in Pergamos exactly describes, we believe, the state of things in Constantine's time. But we will quote the address entire for the convenience of our readers, and then compare it: "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Revelation ii. 12–17.

In Ephesus, we see the first point of departure, leaving their "first love"—the heart slipping away from Christ, and from the enjoyment of *His* love. In Smyrna, the

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Lord allowed the saints to be cast into the furnace, that the progress of declension might be stayed. They were persecuted by the heathen. By means of these trials Christianity revived; the gold was purified; the saints held fast the name and the faith of Christ. Thus was Satan defeated; and the Lord so ruled that the emperors, one after the other, in the most humiliating and mortifying circumstances, publicly confessed their defeat. But in Pergamos, the enemy changes his tactics. In place of persecution from without, there is seduction from within. Under Diocletian he was the roaring lion; under Constantine he is the deceiving serpent. Pergamos is the scene of Satan's flattering power; he is within the church. Nicolaitanism is the corruption of grace—the flesh acting in the church of God. In Smyrna he is outside as an adversary, in Pergamos he is inside as a seducer. This was exactly what took place under Constantine.

Historically, it was when the violence of persecution had spent itself; when men had grown weary of their own rage; when they saw that all their efforts were to no purpose; that the sufferers ceased to care for the things of the world, and became more devoted to Christianity; that even the numbers of the Christians seemed to increase; Satan tries another and an old artifice, once so successful against Israel. (Numb. xxv.) When he could not obtain the Lord's permission to curse His people Israel, he allured them to their ruin, by unlawful alliances with the daughters of Moab. As a false prophet he was now in the church at Pergamos, seducing the saints into unlawful alliance with the world—the place of his throne and authority. The world ceases to persecute; great advantages are held out to Christians,

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by the civil establishment of Christianity; Constantine professes to be converted, and ascribes his triumphs to the virtues of the cross. The snare, alas, is successful; the church is flattered by his patronage; shakes hands with the world, and sinks into its position—"even where Satan's seat is." All was now lost as to her corporate and proper testimony, and the way to popery laid open. Every worldly advantage was no doubt gained; but alas, alas, it was at the cost of the honour and glory of her heavenly Lord and Saviour.

The church, we must remember, is an *outcalling* (Acts xv. 14)—called out from Jew and Gentile to witness that she was not of this world, but of heaven—that she is united to a glorified Christ, and not of this world, even as *He* is not of this world. So He says Himself, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John xvii.

The Christian's mission is on the same principle and of the same character as was Christ's. "As my Father hath sent me," He says, "*even so send I you.*" They were sent, as it were, from heaven to the world, by the blessed Lord, to do His will, care for His glory, and to return home when their work was done. Thus the Christian should be the *heavenly* witness of the truth of God, especially of such truths as man's total ruin, and God's love in Christ to a perishing world; and thereby seek to gather souls out of the world, that they may be saved from the wrath to come. But when we lose sight of our high calling, and associate with the world as if we belonged to it, we become false witnesses. We do the world a great injury, and Christ a great dishonour. This,

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we shall see by and by, was what the church did as to her *corporate* position and action. Doubtless there were many cases of individual faithfulness in the midst of the general declension. The Lord Himself speaks of His faithful Antipas who was martyred. Heaven takes special notice of individual faithfulness, and remembers the faithful by name.

But the eye and the heart of the Lord had followed His poor faithless church to where she had fallen. "I know thy works," He says, "and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." What solemn words are these, and from the lips of her dishonoured Lord! Nothing was hidden from His eye. *I know*, He says; I have seen what has happened. But what, alas, had now taken place? Why, the church as a body had accepted the emperor's terms, was now united to the State, and dwelling in the world. This was Babylon spiritually—committing fornication with the kings of the earth. But He who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks judges her action and her condition. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." He takes the place of one who was armed with the divine sword —with the all-searching, piercing power of the word of God. The sword is the symbol of that by which questions are settled; whether it be the carnal sword of the nations, or "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

It has been often said, that there is always a marked and instructive connection between the way in which Christ presents Himself, and the state of the church which He is addressing. This is most true in the present address. The word of God, evidently, had lost its right place in the assembly of His saints; it was no longer the

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supreme authority in divine things. But the Lord Jesus takes care to shew that it had not lost its power, or place, or authority in His hands. "Repent," He says, "or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." He does not say, observe, I will fight against *thee*, but against *them*. In exercising discipline in the church, the Lord acts with discrimination and with mercy. The public position of the church was now a false one. There was open association with the prince of this world, in place of faithfulness to Christ, the Prince of heaven. But he that had an ear to hear what the Spirit said unto the churches, had secret fellowship with Him who sustains the faithful soul with the hidden manna. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The general defection would no doubt isolate the faithful few —a remnant. To them the promise is given.

The manna, as we learn from John vi., represents Christ Himself as He came down from heaven to give life to our souls. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." As the lowly one who took the place of humiliation in this world, He is our provision for the daily walk through the wilderness. The manna was to be gathered daily, fresh from the dewdrops every morning. The "*hidden* manna" refers to the golden pot of manna that was laid up in the ark as a memorial before the Lord. It is the blessed remembrance of Christ, who was the humbled suffering Man in this world, and who is the eternal delight of God, and of the faithful in heaven. Not only has the true-hearted saint communion with

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Christ as exalted on high, but with Him as the once humbled Jesus here below. But this cannot be if we are listening to the flatteries and accepting the favours of the world. Our only strength against the spirit of the world is walking with a rejected Christ, and feeding on Him as our portion even now. Our high privilege is to eat, not of the manna only, but of the "*hidden manna.*" But who can speak of the blessedness of such communion, or of the loss of those who slip away in heart from Christ, and settle down in worldliness?

The "white stone" is a secret mark of the Lord's special favour. As the promise is given in the address to Pergamos, it may mean the expression of Christ's approval of the way the "*overcomers*" witnessed and suffered for Him, when so many were led away by the seductions of Satan. It gives the general idea of a secret pledge of entire approbation. But it is difficult to explain. The heart may enter into its blessedness, and yet feel unable to describe it. Happy they who so know it for themselves. There are joys which are common to all; but there is a joy, a special joy, which will be our own peculiar joy in Christ, and that for ever. This will be true of all. "And in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." What an unknown source of calm repose, sweet peace, true contentment, and divine strength, we find in the "white stone," and in the "new name," written by His own hand. Others may misunderstand us, many may think us wrong; but He knows all, and the heart can afford to be quiet, whatever may be passing around. At the same time, we must judge everything by the word of God—the sharp sword with two edges—even as we ourselves are judged.

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"There on the hidden bread
Of Christ—once humbled here—
God's treasured store—for ever fed,
His love my soul shall cheer.

Called by that secret name
Of undisclosed delight—
Blest answer to reproach and shame—
Graved on the stone of white."

Having thus briefly glanced at the Epistle to Pergamos, we shall be better able to understand the mind of the Lord as to the conduct of Christians under the reign of Constantine. The professing church and the world had joined hands and were now enjoying themselves together. As the world could not rise to the high level of the church, she must fall to the low level of the world. This was exactly what took place. Nevertheless, the fair form of Christianity was maintained, and there were doubtless many who held fast the faith and the name of Jesus. We now return to the conversion and history of Constantine the Great.

THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE. A.D. 312.

The great event in the religious history of Constantine took place in 312. He was marching from France to Italy against Maxentius. The approaching contest was one of immense moment. It was likely either to be his ruin or to raise him to the highest pinnacle of power. He was in deep thought. It was known that Maxentius was making great preparations for the struggle, by enlarging his army, and by scrupulously attending to all the customary ceremonies of paganism. He consulted

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with great pains the heathen oracles, and relied for success on the agency of supernatural powers.

Constantine, though a wise and virtuous heathen, was a heathen still. He knew what he had to give battle to; and while considering to what god he should betake himself for protection and success, he thought on the ways of his father, the Emperor of the West. He remembered that he prayed to the God of the Christians and had always been prosperous, while the emperors who persecuted the Christians had been visited with divine justice. He resolved therefore to forsake the service of idols and to ask the aid of the one true God in heaven. He prayed that God would make Himself known to him, and that He would make him victorious over Maxentius, notwithstanding all his magical arts and superstitious rites.

While engaged in such thoughts, Constantine imagined that he saw, soon after mid-day, some extraordinary appearance in the heavens. It assumed the sign of a glittering cross, and above it the inscription, "BY THIS CONQUER." The Emperor and the whole army who were witnesses of this wonderful sight stood awestruck. But while the Emperor was gravely meditating on what the vision could signify, night came on, and he fell asleep. He dreamed that the Saviour appeared to him, bearing in his hand the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and directed him to cause a banner to be made after the same pattern and use it as his standard in war, assuring him that while he did so he would be victorious. Constantine, on awaking, described what had been shewn to him while asleep, and resolved to adopt the sign of the cross as his imperial standard, without delay.

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THE BANNER OF THE CROSS.

According to Eusebius, the workers in gold and precious stones were immediately sent for, and received their orders from the lips of Constantine. Eusebius had seen the standard and gives a long account of it. As the greatest interest has been thrown around this relic of antiquity by all ecclesiastical writers, we will give our readers a brief but minute sketch of it.

The shaft, or perpendicular beam, was long and overlaid with gold. On its top was a crown composed of gold and precious stones, with the engraving of the sacred symbol of the cross and the first letters of the Saviour's name, or the Greek letter X, intersected with the letter P.* Just under this crown was a likeness of the Emperor in gold, and below that a cross-piece of wood, from which hung a square flag of purple cloth, embroidered and covered with precious stones. It was called the *Labarum*. This resplendent standard was borne at the head of the imperial armies and guarded by fifty chosen men, who were supposed to be invulnerable from its virtues.

Constantine now sent for christian teachers, of whom he inquired concerning the God that appeared to him, and the import of the symbol of the cross. This gave them an opportunity of directing his mind to the word of God, and of instructing him in the knowledge of Jesus and of His death on the cross. From that time the Emperor declared himself a convert to Christianity. The superstitious hopes and confidence of Constantine and his army were now raised to the highest pitch. The

* ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (Christos), Christ.

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decisive battle was fought at the Milvian bridge. Constantine gained a signal victory over his enemy, though his troops did not number one-fourth of the troops of Maxentius.

THE EDICT OF CONSTANTINE AND LICINIUS. A.D. 313.

The victorious Emperor paid a short visit to Rome. Amongst other things which he did, he caused to be erected in the forum a statue of himself, holding in his right hand a standard in the shape of a cross, with the following inscription: "By this salutary sign, the true symbol of valour, I freed your city from the yoke of the tyrant." Maxentius was found in the Tiber, the morning after the battle. The Emperor evidently felt that he was indebted to the God of the Christians and to the sacred symbol of the cross for his victories. And this, we dare say, was the extent of his Christianity at that time. As a *man* he had not felt his need of it, if ever he did; as a warrior he embraced it earnestly. Afterwards, as a statesman, he owned and valued Christianity; but God only knows whether as a lost sinner he ever embraced the Saviour. It is difficult for princes to be Christians.

Constantine now proceeded towards Illyricum to meet Licinius, with whom he had formed a secret alliance before going to meet Maxentius. The two emperors met at Milan, where their alliance was ratified by the marriage of Licinius to Constantine's daughter. It was during this quiet moment that Constantine prevailed upon Licinius to consent to the repeal of the persecuting edicts of Diocletian, and the issuing of a new edict of complete toleration. This being agreed upon, a public

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edict, in the joint names of Constantine and Licinius, was issued at Milan, A.D. 313, in favour of the Christians, and may be considered as the great charter of their liberties. Full and unlimited toleration was granted to them; their churches and property were restored without compensation, and, outwardly Christianity flourished.

But peace between the emperors, which seemed to be established on a firm foundation, was soon interrupted. Jealousy, love of power, and ambition for absolute sovereignty in the Roman empire, would not allow them to remain long in peace. A war broke out in the year 314, but Licinius was defeated with heavy losses, both in men and territory. A peace was again concluded, which lasted about nine years. Another war became unavoidable, and once more it assumed the form of a religious strife between the rival emperors. Licinius attached the pagan priesthood to his cause, and persecuted the Christians. Many of the bishops he put to death, knowing they were special favourites at the court of his rival. Both parties now made preparations for a contest, the issue of which should be final. Licinius, before proceeding to war, sacrificed to the gods, and extolled them in a public oration. Constantine, on the other hand, relied upon the God whose symbol accompanied his army. The two hostile armies met. The battle was fierce, obstinate, and sanguinary. Licinius was no mean rival; but the commanding genius, activity, and courage of Constantine prevailed. The victory was complete. Licinius survived his defeat only about a year. He died, or rather was privately killed, in 326. Constantine had now reached the height of his ambition. He was sole master —absolute sovereign of the Roman empire, and continued so until his death in 337. For a description of the poli-

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tical and military career of this great prince we must refer the reader to civil history; we will briefly glance at his religious course.

THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF CONSTANTINE.

All that we know of the religion of Constantine up to the period of his conversion, so-called, would imply that he was outwardly, if not zealously, a pagan. Eusebius himself admits that he was at this time in doubt which religion he would embrace. Policy, superstition, hypocrisy, divine inspiration, have been in turn assigned as the sole or the predominant influence, which decided his future religious history. But it would surely be unjust to suppose that his profession of Christianity, and his public declarations in its favour, amounted to nothing more than deliberate and intentional hypocrisy. Both his religious and ecclesiastical course admit of a far higher and more natural explanation. Neither could we believe that there was anything approaching to divine inspiration, either in his midday vision or in his midnight dream. There may have been some unusual appearance about the sun or in the clouds, which imagination converted into a miraculous sign of the cross; and the other appearance may have been the exaggeration of a dream from his highly excited state: but the whole story may now be considered as a fable, full of flattery to the great Emperor, and very gratifying to his great admirer and panegyrist, Eusebius. Few will now be found to give it a place among the authentic records of history.

Policy and superstition, we have no doubt, had a great deal to do with the change that was wrought in the mind of Constantine. From his youth he had witnessed the persecution of the Christians, and must have observed

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a vitality in their religion which rose above the power of their persecutors, and survived the downfall of all other systems. He had seen one emperor after another, who had been the open enemies of Christianity, die the most fearful death. His father only—the protector of Christianity—of all the emperors, during the long persecution, had gone down to an honoured and peaceful grave. Facts so striking could not fail to influence the superstitious mind of Constantine. Besides, he might appreciate with political sagacity the *moral* influence of Christianity; its tendency to enforce peaceful obedience to civil government; and the immense hold which it obviously had on the mind of something like the one half of his empire.

The Emperor's motives, however, are no part of our history, and need not occupy us longer. But in order to have this most important period, or great turning-point in church history clearly before our minds, it may be well to look at the state of the church as he found it in 313, and as he left it in 337.

THE CHURCH AS CONSTANTINE FOUND IT.

Up till this time the church had been perfectly free and independent of the state. It had a divine constitution—direct from heaven—and outside the world. It made its way, not by state patronage, but by divine power, against every hostile influence. In place of receiving support from the civil government, it had been persecuted from the first as a foreign foe; as an obstinate and pestilent superstition. Ten times the devil had been permitted to stir up the whole Roman world against her, and ten times it had to confess weakness and defeat. Had she kept in mind the day of her espousals, and the

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love of Him who says, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church," she never would have accepted the protection of Constantine at the cost of her fidelity to Christ. But the church as a whole was now much mixed up with the world, and far away from her first love.

We have already seen, that since the days of the apostles there had been a growing love of the world, and of outward display. This tendency, so natural to us all, the Lord in love checked, by allowing Satan to persecute. But in place of the church accepting the trial as chastening from the hand of the Lord, and owning her worldliness, she grew weary of the place and path of rejection, and thought she might still please and serve the Lord, and walk in the sunshine of the world. This satanic delusion was accomplished by Constantine, though he knew not what he was doing. "Whatever the motives of his conversion," says Milman, "Constantine, no doubt, adopted a wise and judicious policy, in securing the alliance, rather than continuing the strife, with an adversary which divided the wealth, the intellect, if not the property, and the population of the empire."

THE UNION OF THE CHURCH AND STATE.

In the month of March 313, the banns of the unholy alliance between the Church and the State were published at Milan. The celebrated edict of that date conferred on the Christians the fullest toleration, and led the way to the legal establishment of Christianity, and to its ascendency over all other religions. This was publicly displayed on the new imperial standard—the Labarum. Besides

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the initials of Christ,* and the symbol of His cross, there was also an image of the Emperor in gold. These signs, or mottoes, were intended as objects of worship for both heathen and christian soldiers, and to animate them to enthusiasm in the day of battle. Thus he, who is called the great christian Emperor, publicly united Christianity to idolatry.

But if we have read the mind of Constantine aright, we should have no hesitation in saying, that at this time he was a heathen in heart, and a Christian only from military motives. It was only as a superstitious soldier that he had embraced Christianity. At that moment he was ready to welcome the assistance of any tutelar divinity in his struggles for universal empire. We can see no trace of Christianity, far less any trace of the zeal of a new convert: but we can easily trace the old superstition of heathenism, in the new dress of Christianity. Were it not for such considerations, the Labarum would have been the display of the most daring dishonour to the blessed Lord. But it was done in ignorance. He was also anxious to meet the mind of his heathen soldiers and subjects, and to dissipate their fears as to the safety of their old religion.

The earlier edicts of Constantine, though in their effects favourable to Christianity, were given in such cautious terms as not to interfere with the rites and liberties of paganism. But the Christians gradually grew in his favour, and his acts of kindness and liberality spoke louder than edicts. He not only restored to them the civil and religious rights of which they had been deprived; the

* The letters usually employed to represent the Saviour's name are, I. H. S., which mean *Jesu Hominum Salvator*—Jesus the Saviour of men.

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churches and estates which had been publicly confiscated in the Diocletian persecution; but enabled them, by his own munificent gifts, to build many new places for their assemblies. He shewed great favour to the bishops; had them constantly about him in the palace, on his journeys, and in his wars. He also shewed his great respect for the Christians, by committing the education of his son Crispus to the celebrated Lactantius, a Christian. But with all this royal patronage, he assumed a supremacy over the affairs of the church. He appeared in the synods of the bishops without his guards, mingled in their debates, and controlled the settlement of religious questions. From this time forward, the term *Catholic* was invariably applied, in all official documents, to the church.

CONSTANTINE AS HEAD OF THE CHURCH AND HIGH PRIEST OF THE HEATHEN.

After the total defeat of Licinius, already referred to, the whole Roman world was reunited under the sceptre of Constantine. In his proclamation issued to his new subjects in the East, he declares himself to be the instrument of God for spreading the true faith; and that God had given him the victory over all the powers of darkness, in order that His own worship by his means might be universally established. "Freedom," he says, in a letter to Eusebius, "being once more restored, and, by the providence of the great God and my own ministry, that dragon driven from the ministration of the State, I trust that the divine power has become manifest to all, and that they, who through fear or unbelief have fallen into many crimes, will come to the knowledge of the true God, and to the right and true ordering of their lives."

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Constantine now took his place more openly to the whole world as the head of the church; but at the same time retained the office of the *Pontifex Maximus*—the high priest of the heathen; this he never gave up: he died head of the church and high priest of the heathen.

The unholy alliance, the unhallowed mixture of which we have spoken, and which is referred to and mourned over in the address to Pergamos, meets us at every step in the history of this great historical prince. But having given some explanation of the address, we must leave the reader to compare the truth and the history in a godly way. What a mercy to have such a guide in studying this remarkable period in the history of the church!

Among the first acts of the now sole Emperor of the world was the repeal of all the edicts of Licinius against the Christians. He released all prisoners from the dungeon or the mine, or the servile and humiliating occupations to which they had been contemptuously condemned. All who had been deprived of their rank in the army or in the civil service he restored, and restitution was made for the property of which they had been despoiled. He issued an edict addressed to all his subjects, advising them to embrace the gospel, but pressed none: he wished it to be a matter of conviction. He endeavoured, however, to render it attractive by bestowing places and honours on proselytes of the higher classes and donations on the poor—a course which, as Eusebius acknowledges, produced a great amount of hypocrisy and pretended conversion. He ordered that churches should be everywhere built, of a size sufficient to accommodate the whole population. He forbade the erection of statues of the gods and would not allow his own statue to be set up in the temples. All state sacrifices were forbidden, and in

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many ways he exerted himself for the elevation of Christianity and the suppression of heathenism.

THE EFFECTS OF ROYAL FAVOUR.

We now come to the consideration of that which has been the great historical problem to men of all creeds, nations, and passions; namely, whether the State which seeks to advance Christianity by the worldly means at its command, or the earthly power which opposes it by legal violence, does the greater injury to the church and people of God on the earth? Much may be said, we admit, as to the great blessing of impartial toleration, and of the great advantages to society of the legal suppression of all wicked customs; but court favour has always been ruinous to the true prosperity of the church of God. It is a great mercy to be unmolested, but it is a greater mercy to be unpatronized by princes. The true character of Christians is that of strangers and pilgrims in this world. The possession of Christ, and of Christ in heaven, has changed everything on earth to Christians. They belong to heaven, they are strangers on earth. They are the servants of Christ *in* the world, though not *of* it. Heaven is their home; here they have no continuing city. What has the church to expect from a world that crucified her Lord? or rather, what would she accept from it? Her true portion here is suffering and rejection; as the apostle says, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." The Lord may spare His people, but if trial should come, we are not to think that some strange thing has happened to us. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Romans viii. 36; John xvi. 33.

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THE WITNESS OF HISTORY.

But even from history, we think it can be proved that it was better for Christianity when Christians were suffering at the stake for Christ, than when they were feasted in kings' palaces, and covered with royal favours. By way of illustrating our question, we will give our readers a page from the history of the great persecution under Diocletian, and one from the brightest days of Constantine; and we will quote both from Milman, late Dean of St. Paul's, who will not be suspected of unfairness to the clergy. We speak of the faithful only. It is well known that in the later persecutions, when the assemblies of Christians had greatly increased, many proved unfaithful in the day of trial, though these were comparatively few, and many of them afterwards repented.

"The persecution had now lasted for six or seven years (309), but in no part of the world did Christianity betray any signs of decay. It was far too deeply rooted in the minds of men, far too extensively promulgated, far too vigorously organized, not to endure this violent but unavailing shock. If its public worship was suspended, the believers met in secret, or cherished in the unassailable privacy of the heart, the inalienable rights of conscience. But of course the persecution fell most heavily upon the most eminent of the body. Those who resisted to death were animated by the presence of multitudes, who, if they dared not applaud, could scarcely conceal their admiration. Women crowded to kiss the hems of the martyrs' garments, and their scattered ashes, or unburied bones, were stolen away by the devout zeal of their flocks."

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Under the edict issued from the dying bed of Galerius, the persecution ceased, and the Christians were permitted the free and public exercise of their religion. This breathing time lasted only a few months. But how grand the sight which followed, and what a testimony to the truth and the power of Christianity! The Dean goes on to say:—

"The cessation of the persecution shewed at once its extent. The prison doors were thrown open; the mines rendered up their condemned labourers; everywhere long trains of Christians were seen hastening to the ruins of their churches, and visiting the places sanctified by their former devotions. The public roads, the streets, and market places of the towns were crowded with long processions singing psalms of thanksgiving for their deliverance. Those who had maintained their faith under these severe trials received the affectionate congratulations of their brethren; those who had failed in the hour of affliction hastened to confess their failure and seek for re-admission into the now joyous fold."

We now turn to the altered state of things under Constantine, about twenty years after the death of Galerius. Mark the mighty change in the position of the clergy.

"The bishops appeared as regular attendants upon the court; the internal dissensions of Christianity became affairs of state. The prelate ruled, not now so much by his admitted superiority in christian virtue, as by the inalienable authority of his office. He opened or closed the door of the church, which was tantamount to an admission or an exclusion from everlasting bliss: he uttered the sentence of excommunication, which cast back the trembling delinquent amongst the lost and perishing

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heathen. He had his throne in the most distinguished part of the christian temple: and though yet acting in the presence and in the name of his college of presbyters, yet he was the acknowledged head of a large community, over whose eternal destiny he held a vague, but not therefore less imposing and awful dominion."*

Intellectual and philosophical questions took the place of the truth of the gospel, and mere outward religion for faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness. A crucified Saviour, true conversion, justification by faith alone, separation from the world, were subjects never known by Constantine, and probably never introduced in his presence. "The connection of the physical and moral world had become general topics; they were, for the first time, the primary truths of a popular religion, and naturally could not withdraw themselves from the alliance with popular passions. Mankind, even within the sphere of Christianity, retrograded to the sterner Jewish character; and in its spirit, as well as its language, the Old Testament began to dominate over the gospel of Christ."

THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH DISAPPEARS.

However agreeable to mere nature, the sunshine of the imperial favour might be, it was destructive of the true character of the individual Christian, and of the church corporately. All testimony to a rejected Christ on earth, and an exalted Christ in heaven, was gone. It was the world baptized, in place of believers only, as dead and risen in Christ—as having died in His death, and risen

* *History of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 283—308. Neander, vol. iii., p. 41. *Life of Constantine*, by Eusebius.

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again in His resurrection. The word of God is plain. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. ii. 12.) Baptism is here used as the sign both of death and resurrection. But to whom was that solemn and sacred ordinance now administered? Again, we repeat, To the Roman world. Faith in Christ, the forgiveness of sins, acceptance in the Beloved, were not looked for by the obsequious clergy.

The profession of Christianity being now the sure way to wealth and honours, all ranks and classes applied for baptism. At the Easter and Pentecostal festivals, thousands, all clothed in the white garments of the neophyte, crowded round the different churches, waiting to be baptized. The numbers were so great, and the whole scene so striking, that many thought these conspicuous neophytes must be the innumerable multitude spoken of in the Revelation, who stood before the Lamb, clothed with white robes. According to some writers, as many as twelve thousand men, besides women and children, were baptized in one year in Rome; and a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, was promised by the Emperor to every new convert of the poorer classes. Under these circumstances, and by these venal means, the downfall of heathenism was accomplished, and Christianity seated on the throne of the Roman world.

THE BAPTISM AND DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

The baptism of Constantine has given rise to almost as much speculation as his conversion. Notwithstanding the great zeal he displayed in favour of Christianity, he delayed his baptism, and consequently his reception into

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the church, till the approach of death. Many motives, both political and personal, have been suggested by different writers as reasons for this delay; but the real one, we fear, was *personal*. Superstition had by this time taught men to connect the forgiveness of sins with the rite of baptism. Under this dreadful delusion, Constantine seems to have delayed his baptism until he could no longer enjoy his imperial honours, and indulge his passions in the pleasures of the world. It is impossible to conceive of any papal indulgence more ruinous to the soul, more dishonouring to Christianity, or more dangerous to every moral virtue. It was a licence for such as Constantine to pursue the great objects of his ambition through the darkest paths of blood and cruelty, as it placed in his hands the means of an easy forgiveness, when convenient to himself. But on the other hand, we think it was a great mercy of the Lord, that one, whose private and domestic life, as well as his public career, was so stained with blood, should not have made a public profession of Christianity by receiving baptism and the Lord's supper. Let us hope that he really repented on his death bed.

The bishops, whom he summoned in his last illness to the palace of Nicomedia, heard his confession, were satisfied, and gave him their blessing; Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, baptized him! He now professed for the first time, that if God spared his life, he would join the assembly of His people, and that having worn the white garment of the neophyte, he would never again wear the purple of the emperor. But these resolutions were too late in coming; he died shortly after his baptism, in the year 337.*

* Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, p. 147.

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HELENA, the Emperor's mother, deserves a passing notice. She embraced the religion professed by her son. Her devotion, piety, and munificence were great. She travelled from place to place; visited the scenes which had been hallowed by the chief events of scripture history; ordered the temple of Venus to be demolished, which Hadrian had built on the site of the holy sepulchre, and gave directions for a church to be built on the spot, which should exceed all others in splendour. She died A.D. 328.

We have now seen, alas, too plainly, the sorrowful truth of the Lord's words, that the church was dwelling where Satan's seat is. Constantine left it there. He found it imprisoned in mines, dungeons, and catacombs, and shut out from the light of heaven; he left it on the throne of the world. But the picture is not yet complete; we must notice other features in the history, answering to the likeness in the Epistle.

The reign of Constantine was marked, not only by the church being taken out of her right place, through the deceptions of Satan, but by the bitter fruits of that degrading change. The seeds of error, corruption, and dissension sprang up rapidly, and now came publicly before the tribunals of the world, and in some instances before the pagan world.

THE DONATISTIC AND ARIAN CONTROVERSIES.

Two great controversies—the Donatistic and the Arian, had their beginning in this reign: the former, arising in the West, from a disputed appointment to the episcopal dignity at Carthage; the latter, of Eastern origin, and involving the very foundations of Christianity. The one was a question of *doctrine*, the other of *practice*. Both

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were now corrupted in their very springs and essence; and may have been represented by the false prophet and the Nicolaitanes; but more as to this afterwards. We will now briefly notice the two schisms, as they throw light on the nature and results of the union of Church and State. The Emperor took part in the councils of the bishops as head of the church.

On the death of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, a council of neighbouring bishops was called to appoint his successor. The council was small through the management of Botrus and Celesius, two presbyters who aspired to the office, but Cæcilian, the deacon, who was much loved by the congregation, was elected bishop. The two disappointed persons protested against the election. Mensurius died when absent from Carthage on a journey; but before leaving home he had entrusted some plate and other property of the church to certain elders of the congregation and had left an inventory in the hands of a pious female. This was now delivered to Cæcilian; he of course demanded the articles from the elders; they were unwilling to deliver them up, as they had supposed no one would ever inquire for them, the old bishop being dead. They now joined the party of Botrus and Celesius in opposition to the new bishop. The schism was also supported by the influence of Lucilla, a rich lady whom Cæcilian had formerly offended by a faithful reproof; and the whole province assumed the right of interference.

Donatus, bishop of Cossæ Nigræ, placed himself at the head of the Carthaginian faction. Secundus, primate of Numidia, at the summons of Donatus, appeared in Carthage at the head of seventy bishops. This self-installed council cited Cæcilian before them; alleging that he ought not to have been consecrated except in their pre-

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sence and by the primate of Numidia; and inasmuch as he had been consecrated by a bishop who was a *Tradator*,* the council declared his election void. Cæcilian refused to acknowledge the authority of the council; but they proceeded to elect Majorinus to the see, declared to be now vacant by the excommunication of Cæcilian. But unfortunately for the credit of the bishops, Majorinus was a member of Lucilla's household, who, to support the election, gave large sums of money; which the bishops divided among themselves. A decided schism was now formed, and many persons who before stood aloof from Cæcilian returned to his communion.

Some reports of these discords reached the ears of Constantine. He had just become master of the West; and had sent a large sum of money for the relief of the African churches. They had suffered greatly during the late persecutions. But as the Donatists were considered *sectaries*, or *dissenters* from the true Catholic church, he ordered that the gifts and privileges conferred on the Christians by the late edicts should be confined to those in communion with Cæcilian. This led the Donatists to petition the Emperor, desiring that their cause might be examined by the bishops of Gaul, from whom it was supposed that impartiality might be expected. Here, for the first time, we have an application to the civil power, to appoint a Commission of Ecclesiastical Judges.

Constantine agreed; a council was held at Rome in 313, consisting of about twenty bishops. The decision was in favour of Cæcilian, who thereupon proposed terms

* "A name of infamy given to those who, to save their lives in the persecution, had delivered the scriptures or goods of the church to the persecuting powers." Milner, vol. i. p. 513.

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of reconciliation and reunion; but the Donatists disdained all compromise. They prayed the Emperor for another hearing, declaring that a synod of twenty bishops was insufficient to overrule the sentence of seventy who had condemned Cæcilian. On this representation Constantine summoned another council. The number of bishops present was very large, from Africa, Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, but especially from Gaul. This was the greatest ecclesiastical assembly which had yet been seen. They met at Arles in 314. Cæcilian was again acquitted, and several canons were passed with a view to the African dissensions.

In the meantime, Majorinus died, and a second Donatus was appointed his successor. He was surnamed by his followers "the Great," for the sake of distinction from the first Donatus. He is described as learned, eloquent, of great ability, and as possessing the energy and fiery zeal of the African temperament. The sectaries, as they were called, now assumed the name of *the Donatists*, and took their *character*, as well as their name, from their chief.

CONSTANTINE AS ARBITER OF ECCLESIASTICAL DIFFERENCES.

The Emperor was again entreated to take up their cause, and on this occasion to take the matter entirely into his own hands; to which he agreed, though offended by their obstinacy. He heard the case at Milan in the year 316; where he gave sentence in accordance with the councils of Rome and Arles. He also issued edicts against them, which he afterwards repealed, from seeing the dangerous consequences of violent measures. But Donatism soon became a fierce, wide-spread, and intoler-

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ant schism in the church. As early as 330 they had so increased that a synod was attended by two hundred and seventy bishops; in some periods of their history they numbered about four hundred. They proved a great affliction to the provinces of Africa for above three hundred years; indeed down to the time of the Mahometan invasion.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST GREAT SCHISM IN THE CHURCH.

As this was the first schism that divided the church, we have thought it well to give a few details. The reader may learn some needed lessons from this memorable division. It began with an incident so inconsiderable in itself that it scarcely deserves a place in history. There was no question of bad doctrine, or of immorality, but only a question of a disputed election to the see of Carthage. A little right feeling; a little self-denial; a true desire for the peace, unity, and harmony of the church; and above all, a proper care for the Lord's glory, would have prevented hundreds of years of inward sorrow, and outward disgrace to the church of God. But pride, avarice, and ambition—sad fruits of the flesh—were allowed to do their fearful work. The reader will also see, from the place that the Emperor had in the councils of the church, how soon her position and character were utterly changed. How strange it must have appeared to Constantine, that immediately on his adopting the cross as his standard, an appeal should be made from an episcopal decision on ecclesiastical matters to his own tribunal! This proved the condition of the clergy: but mark the consequences which such an appeal involves; if the party against whom the sentence of

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the civil power is given refuse to yield, they become transgressors against the laws. And so it was in this case.

The Donatists were henceforth treated as offenders against the imperial laws: they were deprived of their churches; many of them suffered banishment and confiscation; even the punishment of death was enacted against them, although it does not appear that this law was enforced in any case during the reign of Constantine. Strong measures, however, were resorted to by the State, with the view of compelling the Donatists to reunite with the Catholics, but, as is usual in such cases, and as experience has taught ever since, the force that was used to compel them only served to develope the wild spirit of the faction that already existed among them. Aroused by persecution, stimulated by the discourses of their bishops, and especially by Donatus who was the head and soul of his party, they were hurried on to every species of fanaticism and violence.

Constantine at length found, taught by experience, that although he could give the church protection, he could not give her peace, issued an edict, granting to the Donatists full liberty to act according to their own convictions, declaring that this was a matter which belonged to the judgment of God.*

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY.

Scarcely had the outward peace of the church been secured by the edict of Milan, when it was distracted by internal dissensions. Shortly after the breaking out of

* Neander, vol. iii. p. 244; Robertson, vol. i. p. 175; Milman, vol. ii. p. 364.

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the Donatist schism in the province of Africa, the *Arian controversy*, which had its origin in the East, extended to every part of the world. We have already spoken of these angry contentions as the bitter fruit of the unscriptural union of the church with the State; not that they necessarily sprang from that union, but from Constantine becoming the avowed and ostensible head of the church, and presiding in her solemn assemblies: questions of doctrine and practice produced an agitation throughout the whole church, and not the church only, but they exercised a powerful political influence on the affairs of the world. This was unavoidable from the new position of the church. The empire being now christian, at least in principle, such questions were of world-wide interest and importance. Hence the Arian controversy was the *first* that rent asunder the whole body of Christians, and arrayed in almost every part of the world the hostile parties in implacable opposition.

Heresies, similar in nature to that of Arius, had appeared in the church before its connection with the State; but their influence seldom extended beyond the region and period of their birth. After some noisy debates and angry words were discharged, the heresy fell into dishonour, and was soon almost forgotten. But it was widely different with the Arian controversy. Constantine, who sat upon the throne of the world, and assumed to be the sole head of the church, interposed his authority, in order to prescribe and define the precise tenets of the religion he had established. The word of God, the will of Christ, the place of the Spirit, the heavenly relations of the church, were all lost sight of, or rather had never been seen, by the Emperor. He had probably heard something of the numerous opinions by which the

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Christians were divided; but he saw, at the same time, that they were a community who had continued to advance in vigour and magnitude; that they were really united in the midst of heresies, and strong under the iron hand of oppression. But he could not see, neither could he understand, that then, spite of her failure, she was looking to the Lord and leaning on Him only in the world. Every other hand was against her, and was led on by the craft and power of the enemy. But, professedly, she was going up through the wilderness leaning on her Beloved, and no weapon formed against her could prosper.

The Emperor, being entirely ignorant of the heavenly relation of the church, may have thought that as he could give her complete protection from outward oppression, he could also by his presence and power give her peace and rest from inward dissensions. But he little knew that the latter was not only far beyond his reach, but that the very security, worldly ease, and indulgence, which he so liberally granted to the clergy, were the sure means of fomenting discords, and of inflaming the passions of the disputants. And so it turned out; he was continually assailed by the complaints and mutual accusations of his new friends.

THE BEGINNING OF ARIANISM.

Arianism was the natural growth of the gnostic opinions; and Alexandria—the hotbed of metaphysical questions and subtile distinctions—its birthplace. Paul of Samosata, and Sabellius of Libya, in the third century, taught similar false doctrines to Arius in the fourth. The gnostic sects in their different varieties, and the *Manichean*—which was the Persian religion with a mix-

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ture of Christianity—may be considered rather as rival religions, than as christian factions; nevertheless they did their evil work among Christians as to the doctrine of the Trinity. Nearly all of these heresies, as they are usually called, had fallen under the royal displeasure, and their followers subjected to penal regulations. The *Montanists*, *Paulites*, *Novatians*, *Marcionites*, and *Valentinians* were amongst the proscribed and persecuted sects. But there was another, a deeper, a darker, and a much more influential heresy than had yet arisen, about to burst forth, and that from the very bosom of the so-called holy Catholic church. It happened in this way.

Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, in a meeting of his presbyters, appears to have expressed himself rather freely on the subject of the Trinity; when *Arius*, one of the presbyters, questioned the truth of Alexander's positions, on the ground that they were allied to the Sabellian errors, which had been condemned by the church. This disputation led Arius to state his own views of the Trinity; which were substantially the denial of the Saviour's Godhead—that He was, in fact, only the first and noblest of those created beings whom God the Father formed out of nothing—that though He is immeasurably superior in power and in glory to the highest created beings, He is inferior in both to the Father. He also held, that though inferior to the Father in nature and in dignity, He is the image of the Father, and the vice-gerent to the divine power, by whom He made the worlds. What his views were of the Holy Spirit are not so plainly stated.*

* The blasphemous doctrine of Arius was an offshoot of gnosticism, perhaps the least offensive in appearance, but directly and

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Alexander, indignant at the objections of Arius to himself, and because of his opinions, accused him of

inevitably destructive of the personal glory of the Son as God, and hence overthrowing the basis of redemption. Modern Unitarianism denies the Lord Jesus to be more than man, and thus even His supernatural birth of the Virgin Mary, though Socinus asserted the singular modification of such an exaltation after His resurrection as constituted Him an adequate object of divine worship. Arius seemed to approach the truth on the side of His preexistence before He came into the world, owned that He, the Son of God, made the universe, but maintained that He was Himself created, though the very first and highest of creatures. It was not the Sabellian denial of distinct personality, but the refusal to the Son, and of course to the Spirit, of true, proper, essential, and eternal Deity.

Not only is Arianism fundamentally inconsistent with the place given to the Son from first to last throughout scripture, as well as with the infinite work of reconciliation and new creation, for which the old creation furnished but the occasion, but it is distinctly refuted beforehand by many passages of holy writ. A few of these it may be well here to cite. Him who, when born of woman, was named Jesus, the Spirit of God declares (John i. 1—3) to be in the beginning the Word who was with God and was God. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." Impossible to conceive a stronger testimony to His uncreated subsistence, to His distinct personality when He was with God before creation, and to His divine nature. He is here spoken of as the Word, the correlate of which is not the Father but God (and thus leaving room for the Holy Spirit); but, lest His own consubstantiality should be overlooked, He is carefully and at once declared to be God.* Go back beyond time and

* The absence of the article here is necessarily due to the fact that Θεός is the predicate of ὁ Λόγος, in no way to an inferior sense of His Godhead, which would contradict the context itself. Indeed, if the article had been inserted, it would be the grossest heterodoxy, because its effect would be to deny that the Father and the Spirit are God by excluding all but the Word from Godhead.

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blasphemy. "The impious Arius," he exclaimed, "the forerunner of Antichrist, had dared to utter his blasphemies against the divine Redeemer." He was judged by two councils assembled at Alexandria, and cast out of the church. He retired into Palestine, but in nowise discouraged by the disgrace. Many sympathized with him, among whom were the two prelates named Eusebius; one of Cæsarea, the ecclesiastical historian; the other, bishop of Nicomedia, a man of immense influence. Arius kept up a lively correspondence with his friends, veiling

the creature, as far as one may in thought, "in the beginning was the Word." The language is most precise; He was in the beginning with God, not ἐγένετο "He was," in the sense of coming into being or caused to be, but ἦν, "He was" in His own absolute being. All things ἐγένετο, "came into being" through Him. He was the Creator so completely that St. John adds, "and without him not one thing came into being which is come into being." On the other hand, when the incarnation is stated in verse 14, the language is, The Word was made flesh, not ἦν but ἐγένετο. Further, when come among men, He is described as "the only-begotten Son 'who is' [ὁ ὤν, not merely who *was*] in the bosom of the Father"—language unintelligible and misleading unless to shew that His manhood in no way detracted from His Deity, and that the infinite nearness of the Son with the Father ever subsists.

Again, Romans ix. 5 is a rich and precise expression of Christ's underivative and supreme Godhead, equally with the Father and the Spirit. "Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." The efforts of heterodox critics bear witness to the all-importance of the truth, which they vainly essay to shake by unnatural efforts which betray the dissatisfaction of their authors. There is no such emphatic predication of supreme Deity in the Bible: not of course that the Father and the Holy Spirit are not co-equal, but because the humiliation of the Son in incarnation and the death of the cross made it fitting that the fullest assertion of divine supremacy should be used of Him.

Next, the apostle says of Christ, "who is the image of the in-

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his more offensive opinions, and Alexander issued warnings against him, and refused all the intercessions of his friends to have him restored. But Arius was a crafty antagonist. He is described in history as tall and graceful in person; calm, pale, and subdued in countenance; of popular address, and an acute reasoner; of strict and blameless life, and agreeable manners; but that under a humble and mortified exterior, he concealed the strongest feelings of vanity and ambition. The adversary had skilfully selected his instrument. The apparent possession of so many virtues fitted him for the enemy's purpose. Without these fair appearances he would have had no power to deceive.

visible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things subsist." Colossians i. 15—17. The reveries of the gnostics are here anticipatively cut off; for Christ is shewn to have been chief of all creation, *because* He was Creator, and this of the highest invisible beings as well as of the visible: all things are said to have been created for Him as well as by Him; and as He is before all, so all subsist together in virtue of Him.

The only other passage I need now refer to is Hebrews i., where the apostle illustrates the fulness of Christ's person among other Old Testament scriptures by Psalms xlv. and cii. In the former He is addressed as God and anointed as man; in the latter He is owned as Jehovah, the Creator, after He is heard pouring out His affliction as the rejected Messiah to Jehovah.

It is impossible then to accept the Bible without rejecting Arianism as a heinous libel against Christ and the truth; for it is not more certain that He became a man than that He was God before creation, Himself the Creator, the Son, and Jehovah.—*From unpublished MSS of W. K.*

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CONSTANTINE'S FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE CONTROVERSY.

The dissension soon became so violent, that it was judged necessary to appeal to the Emperor. He at first considered the whole question as utterly trifling and unimportant. He wrote a letter to Alexander and Arius jointly, in which he reproves them for contending about idle questions and imaginary differences, and recommends them to suppress all unhallowed feelings of animosity, and to live in peace and unity.* It is more than probable that the Emperor had not thought of the serious nature of the dispute, or he could not have spoken of it as trifling and unimportant: but if the letter was drawn up by Hosius, bishop of Cordova, as is generally believed, *he* could not plead ignorance of its character; and must have framed the document according to the expressed feelings of Constantine, rather than according to his own judgment. The letter has been highly extolled by many as a model of wisdom and moderation; and, had the matter been of no graver importance than fixing the time for the Easter festival, it might have deserved that praise; but the Godhead and the glory of Christ were in question, and consequently the salvation of the soul.

Hosius was sent to Egypt as the imperial commissioner, to whom the settlement of the affair was committed. But he found that the dissensions occasioned by the controversy had become so serious, that both parties refused to listen to the admonitions of the bishop, though accompanied with the authority of the sovereign.

* See the Letter in Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, ii. 64—72.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNCIL OF NICE.

CONSTANTINE was now obliged to look more closely into the nature of the dispute. He began to understand that the question was one not of trifling, but of the highest and most essential importance; and resolved to convoke an assembly of bishops, in order to establish the true doctrine, and to allay for ever, as he vainly hoped, this propensity to hostile disputation. Everything necessary for their journey was provided at the public charge, as if it had been an affair of State.

In the month of June, A.D. 325, the first general council of the church assembled at Nice, in Bithynia. About three hundred and eighteen bishops were present, besides a very large number of priests and deacons. "The flower of the ministers of God," as Eusebius says, "from all the churches which abound in Europe, Africa and Asia, now met together." The spectacle was altogether new; and surely to none more so than to the bishops themselves. Not many years had elapsed since they had been marked as the objects of the most cruel persecution. They had been chosen on account of their eminence, as the peculiar victims of the exterminating policy of the government. Many of them bore in their bodies the marks of their sufferings for Christ. They had known what it was to be driven into exile; to work in the mines; to be exposed to every kind of humiliation

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and insult; but now, all was changed, so changed, that they could scarcely believe that it was a reality, and not a vision. The palace gates were thrown open to them, and the Emperor of the world acted as moderator of the assembly.

Nothing could so confirm and declare to the world the sad fall of the church, and her subjection to the State, as the place which the Emperor had in these councils. He did not arrive at Nice till the 3rd of July. On the following day the bishops assembled in the hall of the palace, which had been prepared for the purpose. We learn from Eusebius, that the assembly sat in profound silence, while the great officers of State and other dignified persons entered the hall, and awaited in trembling expectation the appearance of the Emperor. Constantine at length entered; he was splendidly attired: the eyes of the bishops were dazzled by the gold and precious stones upon his raiment. The whole assembly rose to do him honour. He advanced to a golden seat prepared for him, and there stood, in respectful deference to the spiritual dignitaries, till he was requested to sit down. After a hymn of praise was sung, he delivered an exhortation on the importance of peace and union. The council sat for rather more than two months; and Constantine seems to have been present during the greater part of the sittings, listening with patience, and conversing freely with the different prelates.

THE NICENE CREED.

The celebrated confession of faith, usually called "The Nicene Creed," was the result of the long and solemn deliberations of the assembly. They decided against the Arian opinions, and firmly maintained the doctrines of

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the holy Trinity, of the true Godhead of Christ, and of His oneness with the Father in power and glory. Arius himself was brought before the council, and questioned as to his faith and doctrine; he did not hesitate to repeat, as his belief, the false doctrines which had destroyed the peace of the church. The bishops, when he was advancing his blasphemies, with one accord stopped their ears, and cried out that such impious opinions were worthy of anathema together with their author. St. Athanasius, although at the time but a deacon, drew the attention of the whole council by his zeal in defence of the true faith, and by his penetration in unraveling and laying open the artifices of the heretics. But more of the noble Athanasius by and by.

This famous creed was subscribed by all the bishops present, with the exception of a few Arians. The decision of the council having been laid before Constantine, he at once recognized in the unanimous consent of the council the work of God, and received it with reverence, declaring that all those persons should be banished who refused to submit to it. The Arians, hearing this, through fear, subscribed the faith laid down by the council. They thus laid themselves open to the charge of being dishonest men. Two bishops only, Secundus and Theonas, both Egyptians, continued to adhere to Arius; and they were banished with him to Illyria. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nice, were condemned about three months later, and sentenced by the Emperor to banishment. Severe penalties were now denounced against the followers of Arius: all his books were sentenced to be burnt, and it was even made a capital offence to conceal any of his writings. Their labours being completed, the bishops dispersed to their respective provinces. Besides

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the solemn declaration of their opinion of the doctrine in question, they finally set at rest the question respecting the celebration of Easter ;* and settled some other matters which were brought before them.

CONSTANTINE CHANGES HIS MIND.

As the Emperor had no independent judgment of his own in ecclesiastical matters, and certainly no spiritual discernment into these doctrinal controversies, the continuance of his favour could not be relied upon. In little more than two years his mind was completely changed. But these two years were eventful in the domestic history of Constantine, in what was much more serious than a change of mind as to Arianism. The same year that he convened the council of Nice, he gave private orders for the execution of Crispus, his eldest son, and for the suffocation of his wife, Fausta, in a hot bath, who had been married to him for about twenty years. History can

* The Eastern churches from an early period observed the festival of Easter in commemoration of the *crucifixion* of Christ, which answered to the Jewish Passover, on the fourteenth day of the month. This may have arisen from the fact that in the East there were many Jewish converts. The Western churches observed the festival in commemoration of the *resurrection*. This difference as to the day, gave rise to a long and fierce controversy. But after much contention between the Eastern and Western churches, it was ordained by the council of Nice to be observed in commemoration of the resurrection throughout the whole of Christendom. Thus, Easter-day is the Sunday following the fourteenth day of the paschal moon which happens upon or next after the 21st of March: so that, if the said fourteenth day be a Sunday, it is not that Sunday but the next. It may be any Sunday of the five weeks which commence with March 22nd and end with April 25th.

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find no better reasons for those deeds of darkness than a mean and an unworthy jealousy. The wisdom and bravery of Crispus in the final overthrow of Licinius, is said to have excited his father's jealousy, and which was probably fomented by Fausta, who was his stepmother. Knowing that he was bitterly reproached for his cruelty to his own son, he ordered the death of Fausta in his remorse and misery. As we have expressed a very decided judgment against the unhallowed nature of the church's connection with the State, we have said this much of the private life of the Emperor, so that the reader may judge as to the fitness, or rather the unfitness, of one so polluted with blood, to sit as president in a christian council. From that day to this, the state church has been exposed to the same defilement, either in the person of the sovereign or the royal commissioner.

Constantia, the widow of Licinius, and sister of Constantine, possessed great influence with her brother. She sympathized with the Arians, and was under their influence. On her death bed in 327, she succeeded in convincing her brother that injustice had been done to Arius, and prevailed on him to invite Arius to his court. He did so, and Arius appeared, presenting to the Emperor a confession of his faith. He expressed in a general way his belief in the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and besought the Emperor to put a stop to idle speculations, so that schism might be healed, and all, united in one, might pray for the peaceable reign of the Emperor, and for his whole family. By his plausible confession, and his fair speeches, he gained his point. Constantine expressed himself satisfied, and Arius and his followers, in turn, stood high in the imperial favour. The banished ones were recalled. A breath of court air changed the

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outward aspect of the whole church. The Arian party had now full possession of the Emperor's weighty influence, and they hastened to use it.

ATHANASIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA.

In the council of Nice Athanasius had borne a distinguished part; his zeal and abilities designated him at once as the head of the orthodox party, and as the most powerful antagonist of the Arians. On the death of Alexander, in the year 326, he was elevated to the see of Alexandria, by the universal voice of his brethren. He was then only thirty years of age, and knowing something of the dangers as well as the honours of the office, he would have preferred a less responsible position; but he yielded to the earnest desires of an affectionate congregation. He held the see for nearly half a century. His long life was devoted to the service of the Lord and His truth. He continued stedfast in the faith, and inflexible in his purpose, according to the noble stand which he made in the council of Nice, down to his latest hour. The divinity of Christ was to him no mere speculative opinion, but the source and strength of his whole christian life. And nowhere else is it to be found by anyone; as the apostle assures us. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 11, 12.) This life dwells in the only-begotten Son of the Father. He is "the eternal life." And this life, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, is given to all who believe in the true Christ of God. In receiving Christ, we receive eternal life, and become the sons of God—heirs of God—and joint heirs with Christ. This

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life is not the property of any mere creature, however exalted. The holy angels have a most blessed and an unceasing existence by the power of God; but the Christian has eternal life, through faith in Christ, by the grace of God. Nothing could be more fatal to the well-being of the human soul than the doctrine of Arius. But to return to our history.

While the advancement of Athanasius to the see of Alexandria gave great joy and hope to his friends, it filled his enemies with the bitterest resentment. They now saw the great leader of the Catholics* the bishop of that church from which Arius had been expelled; and that he was supported by the affections of his people and by a hundred bishops who owned allegiance to the great see of Alexandria. They knew his power and indefatigable zeal in defence of the decrees of the Nicene Council; and might well judge, that if his influence had been so great when in a private capacity, what may now be expected when he is placed in so eminent a station? Wherefore, they laid their plans and united their powers to overthrow him.

ATHANASIUS CONTESTS THE AUTHORITY OF CONSTANTINE.

Eusebius, of Nicomedia, first resorted to apparently friendly measures with Athanasius, for the purpose of inducing him to re-admit Arius to the fellowship of the church; but failing completely in this, he influenced the Emperor to command him. An imperial mandate was issued to receive Arius and all his friends who were will-

* The term *Catholic Church*, as given by Constantine, simply means the *national* or *established church*.

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ing to connect themselves once more with the catholic church; and informing him that unless he did so, he should be deposed from his station, and sent into exile. Athanasius, however, was not to be intimidated by imperial edicts, but firmly replied, that he could not acknowledge persons who had been condemned by a decree of the whole church. "Constantine now found to his astonishment," says Milman, "that an imperial edict—which would have been obeyed in trembling submission from one end of the Roman empire to the other, even if he had enacted a complete political revolution, or endangered the property and privileges of thousands—was received with deliberate and steady disregard by a single christian bishop. During two reigns, Athanasius contested the authority of the Emperor."* He endured persecution, calumny, exile; his life was frequently endangered in defence of the one great and fundamental truth—the Godhead of the blessed Lord; he confronted martyrdom, not for the broad distinction between Christianity and heathenism, but for that one central doctrine of the christian faith.

A succession of complaints against Athanasius was carried to the Emperor by the Arian, or more properly the Eusebian party. But it would be outside our purpose to go into details: still we must trace the *silver line* a little farther in this noble and faithful witness.

The most weighty charge was, that Athanasius had sent a sum of money to a person in Egypt, to aid him in the prosecution of a design of conspiracy against the Emperor. He was ordered to appear and answer the charge. The prelate obeyed and stood before him. But

* *History of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 450.

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the personal appearance of Athanasius, a man of remarkable power over the minds of others, seems for the moment to have overawed the soul of Constantine. The frivolous and groundless accusations were triumphantly refuted by Athanasius, before a tribunal of his enemies, and the unblemished virtue of his character, undeniably established. And such was the effect of the presence of Athanasius on the Emperor that he styled him a man of God; and considered his enemies to be the authors of the disturbances and divisions: but this impression was of short duration, as he continued to be governed by the Eusebian party.

THE COUNCIL OF TYRE.

In 334 Athanasius was summoned to appear before a council at Cæsarea. He refused on the ground that the tribunal was composed of his enemies. In the following year he was cited before another council, to be held at Tyre, by imperial authority; which he attended. Upwards of a hundred bishops were present; a lay commission of the Emperor directed their proceedings. A multitude of charges were brought against the undaunted prelate; but the darkest, and the only one we will notice, was the twofold crime of *magic* and *murder*. It was said that he had killed Arsenius, a Miletian bishop; had cut off one of his hands, and had used it for magical purposes; the hand was produced. But Athanasius was prepared for the charge. The God of truth was with him. He calmly asked whether those present were acquainted with Arsenius? He had been well known to many. A man was suddenly brought into the court, with his whole person folded in his mantle. Athanasius first uncovered the head. He was at once recognized as

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the murdered Arsenius. His hands were next uncovered; and on examination he was proved to be Arsenius, alive, unmutilated. The Arian party had done their utmost to conceal Arsenius, but the Lord was with His guiltless servant, and the friends of Athanasius succeeded in discovering him. The malice of the unprincipled Arians was again exposed, and the innocence of Athanasius triumphantly vindicated.

But the implacable enemies of the bishop were yet fruitful in their accusations against him. Once more he was commanded to appear in Constantinople, and answer for himself in the imperial presence.

The old charges, on this occasion, were dropped, but a new one was skilfully chosen, with the view of arousing the jealousy of the Emperor. They asserted that Athanasius had threatened to stop the sailing of the vessels laden with corn from the port of Alexandria to Constantinople. By this means a famine would be produced in the new capital. This touched the pride of the Emperor; and whether from belief of the charge, or from a wish to remove so influential a person, he banished him to Treves, in Gaul. The injustice of the sentence is unquestionable.

THE DEATH OF ARIUS.

Neither Constantine nor Arius long survived the exile of Athanasius. Arius subscribed an orthodox creed; Constantine accepted his confession; he sent for Alexander, bishop of Constantinople, and told him that Arius must be received into communion on the following day, which was Sunday. Alexander, who had almost completed a hundred years, was greatly distressed by the Emperor's orders. He entered the church, and prayed

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earnestly that the Lord would prevent such a profanation. On the evening of the same day, Arius was talking lightly, and in a triumphant tone of the ceremonies appointed for the morrow; but the Lord had ordered otherwise; He had heard the prayer of His aged servant; and that night the great heresiarch died. His end is related with circumstances which recall to mind that of the traitor Judas. What effect the event had on Constantine we are not informed; but he died soon after, in his sixty-fourth year.*

REFLECTIONS ON THE GREAT EVENTS IN CONSTANTINE'S REIGN.

Before proceeding farther with our general history, we shall do well to pause for a moment, and consider the bearings of the great changes which have taken place both in the position of the church and the world, during the reign of Constantine the Great. It would not be too much to say, that the church has passed through the most important crisis of her history; and that the downfall of idolatry may be partly considered as the most important event in the whole history of the world. From a period shortly after the flood, idolatry had prevailed among the nations of the earth, and Satan, by his craft, had been the object of worship. But the whole system of idolatry was doomed throughout the Roman earth, if not finally overthrown, by Constantine; it had, at any rate, received its deadly wound.

The church, doubtless, lost much by her union with the State. She no longer existed as a separate community, and was no longer governed exclusively by the will

* See Robertson's *Church History*, vol. i. p. 199. Cave's *Lives of the Fathers*, vol. ii. p. 145.

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of Christ. She had surrendered her independence, lost her heavenly character, and become inseparably identified with the passions and interests of the ruling power. All this was sad in the extreme, and the fruit of her own unbelief. But, on the other hand, the world gained immensely by the change. This must not be overlooked in our lamentations over the failure of the church. The standard of the cross was now raised all over the empire ; Christ was publicly proclaimed as the only Saviour of mankind ; and the holy scriptures acknowledged to be the word of God, and the only safe and certain guide to eternal blessedness. The professing church was no doubt in a low, unspiritual state, before she was connected with the civil power, so that she may have thought more of her own ease, than of her mission of blessing to others; nevertheless, God could work by means of these new opportunities, and hasten the disappearance, from the face of the Roman world, of the fearful abominations of idolatry.

The general legislation of Constantine bears evidence of the silent under-working of Christian principles ; and the effect of these humane laws would be felt far beyond the immediate circle of the christian community. He enacted laws for the better observance of Sunday ; against the sale of infants for slaves, which was common among the heathen ; and also against child-stealing for the purpose of selling them ; with many other laws both of a social and moral character, which are given in the histories already noted. But the one grand, all-influential event of his eventful reign, was the casting down of the idols, and the lifting up of Christ. The Ethiopians and Iberians are said to have been converted to Christianity during his reign.

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THE SONS OF CONSTANTINE.

A.D. 337–361.

Constantine the Great was succeeded by his three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. They had been educated in the faith of the gospel, and had been named Cæsars by their father, and on his death they divided the empire among them. Constantine obtained Gaul, Spain, and Britain ; Constantius, the Asiatic provinces, with the capital, Constantinople ; and Constans held Italy and Africa. The beginning of the new reign was characterized—as was usual in those times—by killing the relatives who might one day prove rivals to the throne ; but along with the old and usual political jealousies and hostilities, a new element now appears—that of religious controversy.

The eldest son, Constantine, was favourable to the catholics, and signalized the commencement of his reign by recalling Athanasius, and replacing him in his see at Alexandria. But Constantine was killed in 340, in an invasion of Italy ; and Constans took possession of his brother's dominions, and thus became the sovereign of two-thirds of the empire. He was favourable to the decisions of the Nicene Council, and adhered with firmness to the cause of Athanasius. Constantius, his Empress, and court, were partial to Arianism. And thus the religious war began between the two brothers—between the East and the West, and was carried on without either justice or humanity, to say nothing of the peaceful spirit of Christianity. Constantius, like his father, interfered much in the affairs of the church ; he pretended to be a theologian, and throughout his reign the empire was incessantly agitated by religious contro-

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versy. The councils became so frequent that the public posting establishments were constantly employed by the continual travelling of the bishops; on both sides councils were assembled to oppose councils. But as the principal events of the period, as well as the *silver line* of God's grace, are connected with Athanasius, we will return to his history.

THE HISTORY OF ATHANASIUS.

After a banishment of two years and four months, Athanasius was restored to his diocese by the younger Constantine, where he was received with a joyful welcome by his flock. But the death of that prince exposed Athanasius to a second persecution. Constantius, who is described as a vain but weak man, soon became the secret accomplice of the Eusebians. In the end of 340 or beginning of 341, a council met at Antioch for the dedication of a splendid church which had been founded by Constantine the elder. The number of bishops is said to have been about ninety-seven, of whom forty were Eusebians. Amongst the number of canons which were passed, it was decided, and with some appearance of equity, that a bishop deposed by a synod, should not resume his episcopal functions till he had been absolved by the judgment of another synod, equal in authority. This law was evidently passed with a special reference to the case of Athanasius; and the council pronounced, or rather confirmed, his degradation. Gregory, a Cappadocian, a man of a violent character, was appointed to the see, and Philagrius, the prefect of Egypt, was instructed to support the new primate with the civil and military powers of the province. Athanasius being the favourite of the people, they refused to have a bishop

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thrust upon them by the Emperor: scenes of disorder, outrage, and profanation followed. "Violence was found necessary to support iniquity," says Milner, "and an Arian prince was obliged to tread in the steps of his pagan predecessors, to support what he called the church."

Athanasius, oppressed by the Asiatic prelates, withdrew from Alexandria, and passed three years in Rome. The Roman pontiff, Julius, with a synod of fifty Italian bishops, pronounced him innocent, and confirmed to him the communion of the church. No fewer than five creeds had been drawn up by the Eastern bishops in assemblies convened at Antioch between 341 and 345, with the view of concealing their real opinions; but not one of them was admitted to be free from an Arian element, though the more offensive positions of Arianism were professedly condemned. The two Emperors, Constantius and Constans, now became anxious to heal the breach which existed between the Eastern and the Western churches; and accordingly they summoned a council to meet at Sardica in Illyria, A.D. 347, to decide the disputed points. Ninety-four bishops of the West, twenty-one of the East, having assembled, and duly considered the matter on both sides, decided in favour of Athanasius: the orthodox party restoring the persecuted primate of Alexandria, and condemning all who opposed him as the enemies of the truth. In the meantime the intruder Gregory died, and Athanasius, on his return to Alexandria, after an exile of eight years, was received with universal rejoicing. "The entrance of the archbishop into his capital," says one, "was a triumphal procession: absence and persecution had endeared him to the Alexandrians; and his fame was diffused from Ethiopia to Britain, over the whole extent of the Christian world."

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After the death of Constans, the friend and protector of Athanasius, in 350, the cowardly Constantius felt that the time was now come to avenge his private injuries against Athanasius. He had no longer Constans to defend him. But how to accomplish his object was the difficulty. Had he decreed the death of the most eminent citizen, the cruel order would have been executed without any hesitation: but the condemnation and death of a popular bishop, must be brought about with caution, delay, and some appearance of justice. The Arians set to work; they renewed their machinations; more councils were convened.

THE COUNCILS OF ARLES AND MILAN.

In the year 353 a synod was held at Arles; and in 355 another met at Milan. Upwards of three hundred bishops were present at the latter. The sessions of the council were held in the palace, Constantius and his guards being present. The condemnation of Athanasius was artfully represented as the only measure which could restore the peace and union of the catholic church. But the friends of the primate were true to their leader and the cause of truth. They assured the Emperor, in the most manly and christian spirit, that neither the hope of his favour, nor the fear of his displeasure, would prevail on them to join in the condemnation of an absent, an innocent, an honoured servant of Christ. The contest was long and obstinate; the interest excited was intense, and the eyes of the whole empire became fixed on a single bishop. But the Arian Emperor was impatient, and before the council of Milan was dissolved, the archbishop of Alexandria had been solemnly condemned and deposed. A general persecution was directed against all who favoured

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him; and also for the purpose of enforcing conformity to the Emperor's opinion. And so sharp did this persecution become, that the orthodox party raised the cry, that the days of Nero and of Decius had returned. Athanasius himself found a refuge in the deserts of Egypt.

THE DEATH, AND SUCCESSORS OF CONSTANTIUS.

In the year 361, Constantius, the patron of the Arians, died. Like his father, he delayed his baptism till a short time before his death. The prosperous days of the Arians were now ended.

JULIAN, commonly called the Apostate, succeeded to the throne; and probably to shew his utter indifference to the theological question in dispute, he ordered the restoration of the bishops whom Constantius had banished. After a brief reign of twenty-two months, and a vain attempt to revive heathenism, he died suddenly of a wound in the breast from a Persian arrow.

JOVIAN, who immediately succeeded Julian to the throne, professed Christianity. He is the first of the Roman Emperors who gave anything like clear evidence that he really loved the truth as it is in Jesus. He seems to have been a sincere Christian before he came to the throne, as he told the apostate Julian that he would rather quit the service than his religion; nevertheless, Julian valued him and kept him near his person until his death. The army declared itself Christian; the Labarum, which had been thrown aside during the reign of Julian, was again displayed at its head. Jovian, however, had learnt from the preceding times, that re-

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ligion could not be advanced by outward force. Hence, he allowed full toleration to his pagan subjects; and, with respect to the divisions among Christians, he declared that he would molest no one on account of religion, but would love all who studied the peace and welfare of the church of God. Athanasius, on hearing of the death of Julian, returned to Alexandria, to the agreeable surprise and joy of his people. Jovian wrote to Athanasius, confirming him in his office, and inviting him to his court. The bishop complied; the Emperor desired instruction and advice; by personal intercourse he gained an influence over Jovian which his enemies in vain attempted to disturb. But the reign of this christian prince lasted only about eight months. He was found dead in his bed, on February 17th, 364; having been suffocated, as was supposed, by charcoal.

VALENTINIAN and VALENS. Jovian was succeeded by two brothers—Valentinian and Valens; the former governed in the West, the latter in the East. In the affairs of the church, Valentinian is said to have followed the plan of Jovian. He declined all interference in questions of doctrines, but adhered firmly to the Nicene faith. As a soldier and a statesman, he was possessed of many great abilities. Both brothers are said to have exposed themselves to danger by the profession of Christianity in the reign of Julian; but Valens was afterwards won over to Arianism by his wife, who persuaded him to receive baptism from the Arian bishop of Constantinople. It is said that the bishop exacted of him an oath to persecute the catholics. Be this as it may, it is certain that soon after his baptism he manifested great zeal in favour of the Arians, and bitterly persecuted the ecclesiastics

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for their adherence to the Nicene faith and the exercise of their influence on its behalf.

Under the edict of Valens, A.D. 367, Athanasius was once more attacked by the Arians—the enemies of christian piety—Tatian, governor of Alexandria, attempted to drive him out of the city; but the feeling of the people was so strong in favour of the venerable bishop, that he dared not for some time to execute his orders. In the meantime, Athanasius, knowing what was near at hand, quietly retired, and remained for four months concealed in his father's sepulchre. This was the fourth time that he had fled from Alexandria. Valens, however, from the dread he seems to have had of the people, recalled him, and permitted him, without any further hindrance, to prosecute his pastoral labours until, A.D. 373, when he was summoned from his work on earth to his rest in heaven. Valens perished in a battle with the Goths, in the year 378, after having reigned fourteen years.

WHAT SERVICE DID ATHANASIUS RENDER TO THE CHURCH?

We are disposed to believe, that under the blessing of God, he was the means of preserving the church from the Arian heresy, which threatened to extinguish from Christianity, both the name and the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy aimed at nothing short of a Christless system, which might ere long issue in an utter abandonment of Christianity. But the Nicene council was used of God to overthrow his wicked devices. The assertion of the Godhead of Christ and of the Holy Ghost as equal with God the Father, was greatly blessed of God then, and has been from that day even until now.

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Though the church had been unfaithful, and drifted into the world, "even where Satan's seat is," the Lord in mercy raised up a great testimony to His holy name, and to the faith of His saints. Historians, both civil and ecclesiastical, bear the most honourable testimony to the ability, activity, constancy, self-denial, and unwearied zeal of Athanasius, in the defence of the great doctrine of the holy Trinity. "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith," are words that refer, we doubt not, to the faithfulness of Athanasius and his friends, as also to the faithful in other times.

The *overcomers* spoken of in the address were also there, without doubt; but it is not permitted of the Lord that they should be seen or recorded by the historian. They were God's hidden ones who were nourished on the hidden manna. They will have a place of great nearness to the Lord in the glory. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Revelation ii. 17.

CHRISTIANITY UNDER THE REIGN OF GRATIAN.

Valentinian was succeeded by his son Gratian in 375. He was then only sixteen years of age. He admitted as a nominal colleague his half brother, the younger Valentinian; and soon after he chose Theodosius as an active colleague, on whom he bestowed the sovereignty of the East. Gratian had been educated in the Christian faith, and gave evidence of being a true believer. He was the first of the Roman Emperors who refused the title and robe of high priest of the ancient religion. How could a Christian, he said, be the high priest of idolatry? It is

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an abomination to the Lord. Thus we see in the early piety of this young prince, the blessed effects of the testimony of the faithful. What a new and strange thing in Rome; a pious prince to ascend the throne of the Cæsars at the age of sixteen! But he was humble as well as pious.

Being conscious of his own ignorance in divine things, he wrote to Ambrose, bishop of Milan, to visit him. "Come," he said, "that you may teach the doctrines of salvation to one who truly believes; not that we may study for contention, but that the revelation of God may dwell more intimately in my heart." Ambrose answered him in an ecstasy of satisfaction: "Most christian prince," he says, "modesty, not want of affection, has hitherto prevented me from waiting upon you. If, however, I was not with you personally, I have been present with my prayers, in which consists still more the duty of a pastor."

The young Emperor was generally popular; but his attachment to the orthodox clergy, the time he spent in their company, the influence they gained over him, especially Ambrose, exposed him to the contempt of the more warlike part of his subjects. The frontiers were sorely pressed at this time by the barbarians, but Gratian was unable to undertake the conduct of a war against them. Maximus, taking advantage of the disaffection of the army, raised the standard of revolt. Gratian, seeing the turn things had taken, fled with about three hundred horse, but was overpowered and killed at Lyons in the year 383. Maximus, the usurper and assassin, placed himself on the throne of the West. He was afterwards overthrown and slain by Theodosius, and the younger Valentinian placed upon the throne of his father.

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THEODOSIUS, SURNAMED THE GREAT.

The measure of our interest in the history of the Roman Emperors, must be proportionate to their acknowledgment of the truth, and their treatment of Christians. Did we not seek to discern God's hand in their government, it would be wearisome and profitless, at this distant period, to examine what remains of them. But to see God's hand, and to hear His voice, and to trace the *silver line* of His grace, throughout those rude times, keeps us in company with Himself, and our experience is increased. But almost everything depends, as to service to God, or blessing to ourselves, in the motive or object with which we study the history of the church, and that which affects it. According to this principle of estimation, Theodosius claims an earnest and careful study. He was God's minister, as well as the Roman Emperor; and used of Him to subdue Arianism in the East, and to abolish the worship of idols throughout the Roman world. Idolatry is the boldest sin of man, and can never be exceeded until "that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.) The full expression of this blasphemy is still future, and will be the signal for immediate judgment, and the dawn of the millennial day.

But the zeal of Theodosius was not merely negative. He supported Christianity, according to his light, more vigorously than any of his predecessors. He completed what Constantine commenced, and far surpassed him in christian zeal and earnestness. Soon after his baptism,

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he assembled a council, which met at Constantinople on May 2nd, 381. The principal objects for which this council was convoked were the following:—To give greater fulness and definiteness to the Nicene creed—to condemn heresies, such as those of the Arians, Eunomians, Eudoxians, Sabellians, Apollinarians, and others —and to take measures for the union of the church.

THE BARBARIC INVADERS.

Most of our readers, even the youngest, have heard of "The decline and fall of the Roman Empire"—the fourth great world-empire spoken of by the prophet Daniel, and by St. John in the Apocalypse. It had been on the decline for some time, and was rapidly approaching its fall, when Theodosius was called to the throne. The frontiers were menaced on all sides by the barbarians, who dwelt immediately outside the Roman earth. "On the shores of each of the great rivers which bounded the empire," says Dean Milman, "appeared a host of menacing invaders. The Persians, the Armenians, the Iberians, were prepared to pass the Euphrates or the eastern frontier; the Danube had already afforded a passage to the Goths; behind them were the Huns in still more formidable and multiplying swarms; the Franks and the rest of the German nations were crowding to the Rhine." This frightful array of barbaric invasion, will shew the reader at a glance, the then position of the fourth empire; and that it is as easy for God to break in pieces the iron, as the brass, the silver, or the gold.

Within the limits of the Roman earth, idolatry still existed, and its worship was undisturbed. Its thousands of temples in all their ancient grandeur and imposing

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ceremony, covered the land. Scarcely could the Christian turn anywhere without seeing a temple, and inhaling the incense offered to idols. Christianity had only been raised to an equal toleration. Arianism, and semi-Arianism, in their many forms, greatly prevailed. In Constantinople and the East, they were supreme. Other heresies abounded. Such was the state of things both within and without the empire on the accession of Theodosius. But for the details of his civil history, we must refer the reader to the authors already noted. We would only add, that he was used of God in arresting for a time the progress of invasion; in demolishing the images and some of the temples of heathen worship; in abolishing idolatry; in suppressing superstition; in causing the decisions of the Nicene council to prevail everywhere; and in giving triumph and predominance to the profession of Christianity.

THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THEODOSIUS.

We will now glance at some of the leading events in the history of the great Theodosius. In the circumstances of these events, will be found the best commentary on the life of the Emperor, the power of the priesthood, and the character of the times.

Theodosius was a Spaniard. Christianity, at an early period, had been established in the Peninsula. It was famous for its firm adherence to the Athanasian doctrines, throughout the Trinitarian controversy. Hosius, a Spanish bishop, was president of the Nicene council. Towards the end of the first year of his reign, Theodosius was admonished by a serious illness not to delay his baptism, as the practice then was. He sent for the bishop of Thessalonica and was at once baptized. Some say

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that he was the first of the Emperors baptized in the full name of the holy Trinity. His admission to the church was immediately followed by an edict which proclaimed his own faith, and prescribed the religion of his subjects. "It is our pleasure that all the nations which are governed by our clemency and moderation, should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans. . . . According to the discipline of the apostles, and the doctrine of the gospel, let us believe the sole deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, under an equal majesty, and a pious Trinity. . . . Beside the condemnation of divine justice they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict upon them."

Such was the stern and uncompromising orthodoxy of Theodosius. Still, however mistaken, he believed it was his duty so to rule as a christian Emperor, and the bishops that he consulted were more inclined to increase than to soften its severity. On one occasion, his sense of justice determined him to order some Christians to rebuild at their own expense a Jewish synagogue, which, in a tumult, had been pulled down. But the vigorous bishop of Milan interfered and prevailed on him to set aside the sentence, on the ground that it was not right for Christians to build a Jewish synagogue. Herein the bishop evidently failed in a matter of common justice. He was less righteous than his imperial master.

THE FAILINGS AND VIRTUES OF THEODOSIUS.

The most prominent defect in the character of Theodosius was a proneness to violent anger; yet he could be softened down and moved to be most merciful after great

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provocation, if properly appealed to. We have a remarkable instance of this in his forgiving the people of Antioch. It happened in this way:

In the year 387, the inhabitants became impatient on account of a tax which the Emperor had imposed upon them; and having been haughtily treated by the rulers, to whom they had respectfully appealed for relief, a great tumult arose in the city. The statues of the imperial family were thrown down and treated with contempt. But a company of soldiers immediately appearing, the sedition was suppressed. The governor of the province, according to the duty of his office, dispatched a faithful narrative of the whole transaction to the Emperor. But as eight hundred miles lay between Antioch and Constantinople, weeks must elapse before an answer could be received. This gave the Antiochians leisure to reflect on the nature and consequences of their crime. They were greatly and constantly agitated with hopes and fears, as may be well supposed. They knew their crime was a serious one, but they had confessed it to Flavian their bishop, and to other influential persons, with every assurance of genuine repentance. At length, twenty-four days after the sedition, the imperial commissioners arrived, bearing the will of the Emperor, and the sentence of Antioch. The following imperial mandate will shew the reader how much depended on the will or temper of a single man in those times.

Antioch, the metropolis of the East, was degraded from the rank of a city; stripped of its lands, its privileges, and its revenues; it was subjected, under the humiliating denomination of a village, to the jurisdiction of Laodicea. The baths, the circus, and the theatres were shut; and, that every source of plenty and pleasure might

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at the same time be intercepted, the distribution of corn was abolished. The commissioners then proceeded to enquire into the guilt of individuals. The noblest and most wealthy of the citizens of Antioch, appeared before them in chains; the examination was assisted by the use of torture, and their sentence was pronounced, or suspended, according to the judgment of these extraordinary magistrates. The houses of the criminals were exposed to sale, their wives and children were suddenly reduced from affluence and luxury, to the most abject distress; and a bloody execution was expected to conclude the horrors of a day, which the eloquent Chrysostom has represented as a lively image of the final judgment of the world. But God, who has the hearts of all men in His hand, and in the remembrance of what Antioch had been in the early days of the church, moved the ministers of Theodosius to pity. They are said to have shed tears over the calamities of the people; and they listened with reverence to the pressing entreaties of the monks and hermits, who descended in swarms from the mountains. The execution of the sentence was suspended, and it was agreed that one of the commissioners should remain at Antioch, while the other returned with all possible speed to Constantinople.

The exasperated rage of Theodosius had cooled down. The deputies of the distressed people obtained a favourable audience. The hand of the Lord was in it, He had heard their cry. Grace triumphed in Theodosius. A free and general pardon was granted to the city and citizens of Antioch: the prison doors were thrown open; and senators, who despaired of their lives, recovered the possession of their houses and estates; and the capital of the East was restored to the enjoyment of her ancient

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dignity and splendour. Theodosius condescended to praise and reward the bishop of Antioch and others who had generously interceded for their distressed brethren; and confessed, that if the exercise of justice is the most important duty, the indulgence of mercy is the most exquisite pleasure, of a sovereign.*

THE SIN AND REPENTANCE OF THEODOSIUS.

The history of the tumult and massacre at Thessalonica in 390, graves yet deeper lines in the character of Theodosius. In studying this period of his life, we are reminded of David the king of Israel. In this sorrowful affair the enemy gained a great advantage over the christian Emperor; but God overruled it for the deeper blessing of his soul.

Botheric, commander in chief of the district, and several of his principal officers, were killed by the populace, on the occasion of a chariot-race. A favourite charioteer had been thrown into prison for a notorious crime, and, consequently, was absent on the day of the games. The populace unreasonably demanded his liberty; Botheric refused, and thus the tumult was raised and the dreadful consequences followed. The news exasperated the Emperor, and he ordered the sword to be let loose upon them. Ambrose interceded, and Theodosius promised to pardon the Thessalonians. His military advisers, however, artfully insisted on the heinous character of the crime, and procured an order to punish the offenders; which was carefully kept secret from the bishop. The soldiers attacked the people indiscriminately when assembled in

* Milman's *History of Christianity*, vol. iii. p. 140. Robertson's *History of the Church*, vol. i. p. 242. Milner's *Church History*, vol. ii. p. 28.

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the circus, and thousands were slain, to revenge the death of their officers.

The mind of Ambrose was filled with horror and anguish on hearing of this massacre. As the servant of God he rises to the place of separation from evil, even in his imperial master. He retired into the country to indulge his grief, and to avoid the presence of the Emperor. But he wrote a letter to him, in which he set before him, in the most solemn manner, his fearful guilt; and assuring him that he could not be allowed to enter the church of Milan until satisfied of the genuineness of his repentance. The Emperor, by this time, was deeply affected by the reproaches of his own conscience, and by those of his spiritual father. He bitterly bewailed the consequences of his rash fury in substituting barbarity for justice; and proceeded to perform his devotions in the church at Milan. But Ambrose met him at the porch, and, laying hold of his robe, desired him to withdraw as a man stained with innocent blood. The Emperor assured Ambrose of his contrition; but he was told that private regrets were insufficient to expiate public offences. The Emperor referred to David, a man after God's own heart. "You have imitated him in his crime, imitate him in his repentance," was the reply of the undaunted bishop.

The Emperor submitted to the priest. For eight months he remained in penitential seclusion; laying aside all his imperial ornaments, until at the Christmas season he presented himself before the archbishop, and humbly entreated re-admission into the church. "I weep," said he, "that the temple of God, and consequently heaven, is shut from me, which is open to slaves and beggars." Ambrose was firm, and required some

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practical fruit of his repentance. He demanded that in future, the execution of capital punishment should be deferred until thirty days after the sentence, in order that the ill effects of intemperate anger might be prevented. The Emperor readily agreed, and was then allowed to enter the church. The scene which followed was overwhelming. The Emperor pulling off his imperial robes, prayed prostrate on the pavement. "My soul cleaveth to the dust," he cried; "quicken thou me according to thy word." The people wept and prayed with him, being moved with his grief and humiliation.

Ambrose mentions in his funeral oration, that from the time of the Emperor's deep anguish, he never passed a day without recalling to mind, the crime into which he had been betrayed by his great failing—an infirmity of temper.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DISCIPLINE OF AMBROSE, AND THE PENANCE OF THEODOSIUS.

There are few events in the annals of the church more deeply interesting than the penance of the great Theodosius, and the rigorous conditions of restoration demanded by Ambrose. Stripped of the superstition and formalities peculiar to the times, we have a case before us of the most genuine and salutary discipline. We must not suppose for a moment, that the behaviour of Theodosius was the result of weakness or pusillanimity; but of a true fear of God; a real feeling of his guilt; a tender conscience, an acknowledgment of the claims of God, to whom all worldly greatness is subject.

Ambrose was neither haughty nor hypocritical, as we find many of the pontiffs became in later times. He cherished a strong affection for the Emperor, and a

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sincere concern for his soul; but he acted towards him from a solemn sense of his duty. He had a great idea, no doubt, of the dignity with which his office invested him; and he felt himself bound to use it in behalf of justice and humanity, and in controlling the power of earthly sovereignty: a character of power, most certainly, never granted by God to a christian minister; and which often proved in after ages to be a most dangerous power, as the priest who holds in his hands the king's conscience may inflame or moderate his sanguinary passions. In the case of Ambrose it was pure christian influence. He appeared, though somewhat out of character, as the vindicator of outraged humanity, and as exercising a judicial authority over the meanest and the mightiest of mankind. But it is always disastrous to interfere with God's order, even when the best of objects seem to be thereby gained.

About four months after his victory over Eugenius, and the chastisement of the assassins of Valentinian, Theodosius the Great died at Milan, in the year 395—not exceeding fifty years of age; the last Emperor who maintained the dignity of the Roman name. Ambrose did not long survive his imperial friend. He died at Milan on Easter-eve, 397. He deepened and strengthened the foundations of ecclesiastical power which was to influence Christianity in all future ages. Basil, the two Gregories, and Chrysostom flourished about this time.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

THE century which closes with the death of the great Theodosius and Ambrose, has been full of the deepest interest to the christian reader. Events, the most momentous—affecting the majesty and glory of God, and the wellbeing of mankind—have transpired. From 303 till 313, the church passed through her most trying ordeal under Diocletian. Ten years she was in a fiery furnace; but in place of being consumed, as her enemies vainly imagined, she seemed to increase in numbers as well as in purity and power. Satan was permitted to do his utmost against her; and he so moved and stirred up the heathen population, that in all parts of the empire they arose in arms; first, to defend their ancient polytheism; and, secondly, to root out Christianity, by persecuting the Christians, and destroying their sacred books. Thus the century commenced with the great and final struggle between paganism and Christianity, and closed with the total ruin of the former, and the complete triumph of the latter. The contest ended with the fourth century, and victory has rested with Christianity ever since.

Such has been the external history of the church, and the accomplishment, so far, of the word of the Lord in the Epistles to Smyrna and Pergamos. But there are other things which most reasonably demand a little of our attention before entering on the fifth century; and

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no part of the wide field which lies before us seems to have a stronger claim than the sphere and influence of the great prelates of the East and the West. It must also have occurred to our readers, from the necessary allusions to baptism, that the observance of that rite had an immense place in the minds of those early Christians. They believed that the waters of baptism purified the soul completely. We have thought, then, of combining the two—of giving a brief history of baptism from the writings of the Fathers; which will, at the same time, give us an opportunity of seeing what views they held, not only on baptism, but on the fundamental truths of the gospel.

ECCLESIASTICAL VARIATIONS OF BAPTISM.

In the New Testament there is perfect *uniformity*, both as to precept and example, on the subject of baptism; but in our own day, and ever since the beginning of the third century, we find in the professing church endless variations both as to theory and practice on this important subject. Those not acquainted with ecclesiastical history naturally inquire, When, and by what means, did such differences arise in the church?

As it has been our plan all through these "Short Papers" to find out the *beginnings* of great questions which have affected the peace and prosperity of the church, we will endeavour, very briefly, to point out the beginning and early history of ecclesiastical baptisms. We use the term *ecclesiastical*, as distinguished from *scriptural*. Nothing is of divine authority either in theory or practice that was introduced after the days of the inspired apostles. So that nothing can be *christian* baptism that *varies* from the institution of Christ and the

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practice of His apostles. To bring in alterations is to change the thing itself, and make it not the same, but another baptism; hence we find in history there were baptisms many.

As the early history of these variations, and not controversy, is our object, we will avoid giving any opinion on the long agitated question. For more than sixteen hundred years the controversy has been maintained with great determination, and by able men on both sides. No controversy in the history of the church has been of such continuance, or conducted with such confidence of victory by both parties. As there is no *express mention* of infant baptism in scripture, the baptists think that their position is beyond question; and the pædobaptists as firmly believe that it may be inferred from several well known passages than infant baptism was practised in the days of the apostles. There has not been so much controversy as to the *mode* of baptism. The Greeks, Latins, Franks, and Germans, appear to have baptized by immersion. "Baptism is a Greek word," says Luther, "and in Latin it may be rendered *mersio*, immersion; . . . . and though among the greater part of us this practice has fallen into disuse, nevertheless, they that are baptized ought to be entirely immersed, and forthwith lifted out of the water, and this the etymology of the word indicates, as also in the German language." Neander's testimony is to the same effect: "Baptism was originally administered by immersion; and many of the comparisons of St. Paul allude to this form of its administration. The immersion is a symbol of death, of being buried with Christ; the coming forth from the water is a symbol of resurrection with Christ; and both, taken together, represent the second birth, the death of the old

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man, and a resurrection to a new life."* Cave, Tillotson, Waddington, &c., &c., speak of the mode of baptism in a similar way. And as all these testimonies are from pædobaptists, we may dismiss this part of the subject as fairly proved in church history; nevertheless, faith can only stand in the word of God. We follow not the Fathers but Christ.

IRENÆUS, bishop of Lyons, is the first of the Fathers that alludes to infant baptism. He died about the year 200, so that his writings are placed towards the close of the second century The apostolical fathers never mention it. By this time, superstition, to a great extent, had taken the place of faith, so that the reader must be prepared to hear some extravagant notions advanced by some of the great doctors; yet many of them, we doubt not, were true, earnest Christians. "Christ came to save all persons by himself," says Irenæus, "all, I mean, who by him are regenerated—baptized—unto God: infants and little ones; children and youths, and elder persons. Therefore he went through the several ages: for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants: to little ones he was made a little one, sanctifying those of that age: and also giving to them an example of godliness, justice, and dutifulness: to youths he was a youth," &c., &c. Baptism was thus taught to be a complete lustration of the soul for all ages and conditions of mankind. But the controversy soon resolved itself into the one question —infant or adult. Regeneration, born again, baptism, are used as interchangeable terms, and as meaning the same thing, in the writings of the Fathers.†

* *The Inquirer*, 1839, p. 232.

† See Dr. Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*. We quote from

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Here we have the *origin*, so far as ecclesiastical antiquity informs us, of infant baptism. The passage is somewhat obscure and extremely fanciful; but it is the first trace we have of the yet unsettled question, and probably the root of all its variations ecclesiastically viewed. The effect of such teaching on superstitious minds was immense. Anxious parents hastened to have their delicate infants baptized lest they should die under the curse of original sin, and the man of the world delayed his baptism until the near approach of death, to avoid any subsequent stain, and that he might emerge from the waters of regeneration, to the realms of pure and unmingled blessedness. The example and reputation of Constantine led many thus to delay their baptism, though the clergy testified against the practice.

TERTULLIAN. The testimony of this Father would prove that infants were baptized in his day—he died about 240—but that he was not favourable to the practice: as he says, "But they whose duty it is to administer baptism, are to know that it must not be given rashly. . . . Therefore according to every man's condition and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children. For what need is there that the godfathers should be brought into danger? because they either fail of their promises by death, or they may be mistaken by a child's proving of wicked disposition."

his translations of the Fathers. Having received the thanks of the clergy of the lower house of Convocation, and the honour of D.D. from the University of Oxford, for his great work in defence of infant baptism, we may rely on his quotations as, in the main, correct, and as the most favourable to his object.

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ORIGEN, in discoursing on the sin of our nature, alludes to baptism as the appointed means for its removal: "Infants are baptized," he says, "for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? or when have they sinned? or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense that we mentioned even now: none is free from pollution, though his life be but of the length of one day upon the earth? And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism, the pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized."

CYPRIAN, bishop of Carthage, about the year 253, received a letter from one Fidus, a country bishop, inquiring, whether an infant, before it was eight days old, might be baptized if need required. The answer proves, not only that infant baptism was then practised, but the necessity of it in their minds because of its efficacy. Cyprian, with sixty-six bishops in council, says, "As to the case of infants; whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born; and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, so that none should be baptized and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born: we were all in our assembly of the contrary opinion. For as for what you thought fitting to be done, there was not one that was of your mind, but all of us, on the contrary, judged that the grace and mercy of God is to be denied to no person that is born. For whereas our Lord in His gospel says, 'the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them,' so far as lies in us, no soul, if possible, is to be lost," &c., &c.

Gregory Nazianzen, bishop of Constantinople, was a

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Father of great note about the year 380. He was the means of destroying the power of Arianism in the Eastern capital, where it had been maintained in great strength for nearly forty years. He had to encounter much opposition and even persecution at first; but by degrees, his eloquence, the practical and serious tone of his teaching, and the influence of his godly life, began to tell, and gained him a firm footing, though he never liked the imperial style of the capital.

Dr. Wall quotes largely from Gregory on baptism; our extracts will be brief. Like the rest of the Fathers, he is wild on this subject. "What say you to those that are as yet infants, and are not in capacity to be sensible either of the grace or the miss of it? Shall we baptize them too? Yes, by all means, if any danger make it requisite. For it is better that they be sanctified without their own sense of it, than that they should die unsealed and uninitiated. And a ground of this to us is circumcision, which was given on the eighth day, and was a typical seal, and was practised on those that had no use of reason." Against the practice of delaying baptism till a death-bed, he speaks strongly and earnestly; comparing the service to the washing of a corpse, rather than to christian baptism.

Basil, bishop of Cæsarea, is constantly associated with the two Gregories. Gregory of Nyssa was his brother; the other, his chief friend. Cappadocia gave birth to the three Fathers. Basil was faithful to the Athanasian creed during its days of depression and adversity, but did not live to behold its final triumph. He died about 379. He was a great admirer and a true example of monastic Christianity. He embraced the ascetic faith, abandoned his property, and practised such severe aus-

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terities as to injure his health. He fled into the desert; his fame collected, as it were, a city around him; he built a monastery, and monasteries sprang up on every side.

His views of baptism are similar to those of his friend Gregory; he urges the necessity of it from the same superstitious feeling that they all had. "If Israel had not passed through the sea," he says, "they had not got rid of Pharaoh: and unless thou pass through the waters of baptism, thou shalt not be delivered from the cruel tyranny of the devil," &c., &c. This he would apply to all ages, and enforce it by the words of the Lord to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, like all the Fathers we have yet met with, is thoroughly mistaken as to the meaning of John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "You see," he says, "that Christ excepts no person, not an infant, not even one that is hindered by unavoidable accident."

JOHN, *surnamed* CHRYSOSTOM, which means the *golden-mouthed;* he obtained this name from his smooth, flowing eloquence. He was such a favourite of the people, that they used to say, "We had rather the sun should not shine, than that John should not preach." He was evidently in favour of infant baptism, though it is not clear that he believed in original sin. "For this cause we baptize infants also," he says, "though they are not defiled with sin; that there may be superadded to them *saintship, righteousness, adoption, inheritance,* a *brother-*

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hood with Christ, and to be made *members with Him*." It would be difficult to say more as to the alleged benefits of baptism than what we have here enumerated. But extravagant as the whole sentence may seem, it has been the text of the pædobaptists from that day to this. Most of our readers are familiar with these words, "Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." These words are taken, not from scripture, but from Chrysostom.

Dr. Wall is anxious to make it appear, that this great doctor was not unsound as to original sin. He suggests that the meaning of his words may be, "they are not defiled with their *own actual sins*." But Chrysostom does not say with *their own*, but that they are not defiled with sin. And surely every child is defiled, as saith the Psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." In vain do we look for soundness on many of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity among the Fathers; to say nothing of what they all overlooked, such as, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, the heavenly calling, and the heavenly relations of the church, the difference between the house of God and the body of Christ, and the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Titus ii. 11–15.

REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF INFANT BAPTISM.

Enough, we believe, for our present purpose, has been said on the subject of infant baptism. The reader has before him the testimony of the most trustworthy witnesses, for the first two hundred years of its history. The practice seems to have taken its rise, and derived all its

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wondrous influence, from a misinterpretation of John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It was argued from this passage that baptism was necessary to salvation, and all the blessings of grace. The efficacy of the blood of Christ, the purifying power of the word of God, and the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, were all attributed to the due observance of external baptism. And need we wonder at the place it has held in the professing church these sixteen hundred years, or at its mighty influence over all classes and all ages? though many do not hold with baptismal regeneration.

The ancient Christians, Dr. Wall affirms, without the exception of one man, teach that these words of the Saviour refer to baptism. Calvin, he believes, was the first man that ever objected to this interpretation, or that refused to accept it as teaching the necessity of baptism to salvation. Supposing these statements to be correct, they prove, that the great ecclesiastical fabric that arose out of baptism, was founded on a misinterpretation. The church of Rome, Lutherans, and Anglicans, continue to follow the fathers in this misapplication of the truth. "Shall that," says Hooker, referring to Calvin's new interpretation of John iii. 5, "which hath always received this and no other construction be now disguised with the toy of novelty? God will have baptism embraced, not only as a sign or token of what we receive, but also as an instrument or means whereby we receive grace." Bishop Burnet also observes, speaking of the ancient times: "The words of our Saviour to Nicodemus were expounded so as to import the absolute necessity of baptism in order to salvation. These words 'the kingdom

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of God,' being taken to mean eternal glory, that expression of our Saviour's was understood to import this, that no man could be saved unless he were baptized," &c., &c.* Calvin taught, that the benefits of baptism were limited to the children of the elect, and thus introduced the idea of hereditary Christianity. The Presbyterians follow Calvin, and as a consequence of his teaching, circumcision becomes both the warrant and the rule of infant baptism. But some of our readers may be anxious to know what we believe to be the true interpretation of John iii. 5, seeing that so much is built upon it.

WHAT IS THE TEACHING OF JOHN III. 5?

The expression "born of water," we believe, in no way means baptism. The new birth is the Saviour's theme; without which no man can *see* or *enter* into the kingdom of God. It was not yet come visibly—"not with observation"—but it was there among them, as God's new sphere of power and blessing. Flesh cannot even perceive this kingdom. Christ had not come to teach and improve the flesh, as Nicodemus seemed to think; but that man might be partaker of a divine nature which is imparted by the Spirit. No mere external rite admits to the kingdom. There must be a new nature or life suited to the new order of things. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Then the Lord shews Nicodemus the only way of entering into the kingdom. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of

* Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, book v. 59, 60. Burnet *on the Articles*, Art. 27.

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God." Water is here used as the symbol of the cleansing and purifying power of the *word* of God; as in Peter, "seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Here, the truth is spoken of as the instrument, and the Spirit as the agent, in the new birth, as he goes on to say, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the *word of God*." Two things are necessary—the word, and the Spirit. 1 Peter i. 22, 23.

The passage obviously means, the application of the word of God in the power of the Spirit; operating in the heart, conscience, thoughts, and actions; and thereby bringing in a new life from God, in which we have His mind, and His thoughts about the kingdom. The following passages will make it still plainer. "Of his own *will* begat he us with *the word of truth*." (James i. 18.) "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of *water by* the word." (Eph. v. 26.) "Now ye are clean through the *word* which I have spoken unto you." (John xv. 3.) Here we have the moral cleansing or purifying of the soul, by the application of the word through the Spirit, which judges all things, and which works in us new thoughts and affections, suitable to the presence and glory of God.

As a question of *interpretation*, then, we see no allusion to baptism in John iii. 5: baptism may set forth that which is conveyed by it, but baptism itself conveys nothing. On the other hand—according to the inspired commentaries in the Epistles—baptism is the sign of death, not of giving life, as the fathers uniformly affirm. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried

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with him by baptism into death." (Rom. vi.; Col. ii.; 1 Peter iii.) Besides it is perfectly plain that Nicodemus could not possibly have known anything of proper christian baptism, as it was not instituted by our Lord till after He arose from the dead.

MODERN PÆDOBAPTISTS.

The church of Rome and all who follow the Fathers, confess that the origin of their practice is tradition. But there are many in our day, and have been since the Reformation,* who hold infant baptism from the writings of the New Testament. The following are the principal passages they refer to: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." . . . . "Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." . . . . "For the promise is unto you, and to your children." . . . . "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And many draw their arguments chiefly from the baptism of households, and from the Abrahamic covenant. Mark x.; 1 Corinthians vii.; Acts ii.; Ephesians vi.; Acts xvi.; Genesis xvii.

ANTI-PÆDOBAPTISTS, or "*the Baptists*," as they call themselves, simply affirm, that in all the allusions to baptism in the writings of the apostles, it is uniformly coupled with faith in the gospel; and that such expressions as "*buried with him* by baptism," and "*planted together* in the likeness of His death," &c., must mean,

* Then, by the Reformers, and afterwards by the Puritans, an effort was made to find scripture for what the church of Rome had held as tradition; the Protestants went to the Bible for everything, the Catholics to the Fathers.

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that the person so baptized has part with Christ by faith. And, further, that as baptism is an ordinance of Christ, it must of necessity be celebrated exactly as He appointed. Nothing, it is said, but *direct scripture* ought to be the foundation for our faith and practice in divine things. And since to the very being of baptism a subject to whom it must be administered is necessary, and a mode of administering, without which it would only be a notion in the human mind—these things, therefore, are as necessary as baptism itself. And hence it follows that the true subjects, which are professed believers only, and the true mode, which is immersion only, are necessary to true christian baptism.*

THE ORIGIN OF INFANT COMMUNION.

When superstition in general takes the place of faith, and human notions the place of God's word, where will even serious and enlightened men not be carried to! Augustine strongly advocated the practice of infant communion. But it followed infant baptism as a necessary consequence. The Fathers affirmed that the grace of God bestowed upon the subjects of baptism, was given without measure, and without any limitation as to age; therefore, they reasoned, that the Lord's supper might consistently be administered to all who had been baptized, whether infants or adults. The custom prevailed for many ages; it is still observed by the Greek church; but we refrain from details. In general, the true, inward, spiritual meaning and design of the Lord's supper were greatly lost sight of; and the most superstitious reverence was expressed for the external symbols of the ordinance.

* Gale's *Reflections on Wall's History*, vol. iii. p. 84.

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THE POSITION AND CHARACTER OF THE CLERGY.

In studying the internal history of the church during the fourth century, innumerable things crowd for a brief notice; but we can only refer to those which characterize the period. The altered position of the clergy is an important one, and will account for many changes that were introduced by them. From the time of Constantine, the members of the christian ministry attained a new social position, with certain secular advantages. This led great numbers to join the sacred order from the most unworthy motives. Hence the sorrowful influence of this unhallowed mixture on the whole professing church. We constantly meet with it in the pride, arrogance, luxury, and assumed dignity of the whole clerical order. Thus, it is said, that Martin of Tours, when at the court of Maximus, allowed the *Empress* to wait on him at table; and that when the *Emperor* had desired him to drink before him, and expected to receive the cup back after the bishop had drunk, Martin passed it to his own chaplain, as being higher in honour than any earthly potentate. This circumstance shews us where the clergy now were, what they thought of themselves and of spiritual dignity in opposition to secular rank. The church had now become like "a great house, wherein are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." And such it has been ever since, and such it will be to the end; but the path of the faithful is plain. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, [the vessels to dishonour,] he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Timothy ii. 20, 21.

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THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF MONASTICISM.

Before we approach the period of "the Church of Thyatira," it may be well to notice the rise and growth of the early ascetic tendencies. The influence of monasticism was indeed great during the dark ages, and throughout the Western churches. Let us trace it to its source. It is well to know the beginning of things, especially of important and influential things.

During the violence of the Decian persecution, about the year 251, many Christians fled into voluntary exile. Among these was a young man named PAUL, of Alexandria; who took up his abode in the desert of Thebais, or Upper Egypt. By degrees he became attached to the mode of life he had adopted from necessity; and is celebrated as the first christian hermit, though without fame or influence at the time. Not so, with his immediate and great successor.

ANTONY, who is regarded as the father of monasticism, was born at Coma, in Upper Egypt, about the year 251. In boyhood and youth, it is said, he was thoughtful, serious, and of a retiring disposition. He cared little for worldly learning, but desired earnestly the knowledge of divine things. Before reaching the age of nineteen, he lost his parents, and came into possession of considerable property. One day while in church, it so happened that the gospel concerning the rich young man was read before the assembly. Antony considered the words of the Saviour as addressed from heaven to himself: "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." (Luke xviii. 22.) He forthwith made

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over his lands to the inhabitants of his village, turned the rest of his estates into money, and gave all to the poor, except a small portion which he reserved for the maintenance of his only sister. On another occasion, he was deeply impressed with the words of the Lord, "Take no thought for the morrow" (Matt. vi. 25–34), and taking these words in a literal sense, he parted with the remainder of his property, placed his sister with a society of pious virgins, that he might be free from all cares about earthly things, and embraced a life of rigid asceticism.

Antony is said to have visited Paul the hermit, and all the most famous ascetics he could hear of, endeavouring to learn from each his distinguishing virtue, and to combine all their graces in his own practice. He shut himself up in a tomb, where he lived ten years. By excessive fastings, exhaustion, and an over-excited imagination, he fancied himself beset by evil spirits, with whom he had many and severe conflicts. Antony became famous. Many visited the unnatural place of his abode in the hope of seeing him, or of hearing the noise of his conflicts with the powers of darkness. But he left his tomb, and dwelt in a ruined castle near the Red Sea, for other twenty years. He increased his mortifications with the view of overcoming the evil spirits, but the same temptations and conflicts followed him.

Strange as it may seem, this remarkable and deluded man had a true heart for Christ, and a tender heart for His people. The persecution under Maximus (311) drew him from his cell to the public scenes in Alexandria. His appearance produced a great effect. He attended on the sufferers, exhorting them to unwavering confidence in their confession of Christ, and manifested

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great love to the confessors in the prisons and in the mines. He exposed himself in every way to danger, yet no one ventured to touch him. A kind of inviolable sanctity was supposed to surround these unearthly, ghostly looking men. When the fury of the persecution was past, he escaped to a new place of solitude in the side of a lofty mountain. Here he cultivated a small piece of ground; multitudes flocked to him; great numbers imitated him. Mourners came to him to be comforted, the perplexed to be advised, and enemies to be reconciled. Miracles were ascribed to him, his influence was boundless.

In the year 352, when he was a hundred years old, he appeared a second time in Alexandria. This was to counteract the spread of Arianism, and defend with all his influence the true orthodox faith. His appearance produced a great sensation; multitudes thronged to see the monk—the man of God, as he was called—and hear him preach; and many pagans were converted to Christianity by his means. Antony and his monks were steady and powerful supporters of the Nicene creed. He lived to the age of a hundred and five, and died only a few days before Athanasius found a refuge among the monks of the desert in 356.

THE VIRTUES AND FAILURES OF ANTONY.

Antony was evidently sincere and honest, though utterly mistaken and misled by the craft and power of Satan. In place of acting upon the Saviour's commission to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," or following His example who went about doing good, he thought to attain to a more elevated spirituality by withdrawing

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from mankind, and devoting himself to austerity of life, and to uninterrupted communion with heaven. He was a Christian, but utterly ignorant of the nature and object of Christianity. Holiness in the flesh was his one grand object; though the apostle had said, "In me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing." Therefore all was failure, utter failure; as it ever must be, if we think there is any good thing in human nature, or try to become better in ourselves. In place of sanctifying his nature by fastings and idleness, he found that every evil passion was excited to greater activity.

"Hence, in his solitude," says Neander, "he had to endure many conflicts with sense, which in some active vocation, demanding the exertion of all his powers, might perhaps have been avoided. The temptations he had to battle with were so much the more numerous and powerful, as he was given to idle self-occupation, as he busied himself in fighting down the impure images that were constantly coming up from the abyss of corruption within his heart, instead of forgetting himself in worthier employments, or in looking away to the everlasting source of purity and holiness. At a later period, Antony, with a conviction grounded on long years of experience, acknowledged this, and said to his monks, 'Let us not busy our imaginations in painting spectres of evil spirits; let us not trouble our minds as if we were lost. Let us rather be comforted and cheerful at all times, as those who have been redeemed; and let us be mindful that the Lord is with us who has conquered them and made them nothing. Let us ever remember that, if the Lord is with us, the enemy can do us no harm. The spirits of evil appear different to us, according to the different moods of mind in which they find us. . . . But if they find

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us joyful in the Lord, occupied in the contemplation of future blessedness and of the things of the Lord, reflecting that everything is in the Lord's hand, and that no evil spirit can do any harm to the Christian, they turn away in confusion from the soul which they see preserved by such good thoughts.' "*

It is perfectly plain from these counsels to his monks, that Antony was not only a sincere Christian, but that he had a good knowledge of the Lord and of redemption, though so completely turned aside by a deceived heart. We are never safe unless moving on the direct lines of the truth of God. The system which this man introduced in his false dreams of perfection in the flesh, became, in process of time, the very hot-bed of profligacy and vice. And thus it continued for more than a thousand years. It was not until the sixteenth century, when the divine light of the blessed Reformation, bursting upon a scene of dense moral darkness, revealed the deep-seated corruptions and the flagrant enormities of the different monastic orders. The monks at that time, like swarms of locusts, covered all Europe; they proclaimed everywhere, as history informs us, the obedience due to holy mother church, the reverence due to the saints, and more especially to the Virgin Mary, the efficacy of relics, the torments of purgatory, and the blessed advantages arising from Indulgences. But as the monks lost their popularity and influence at the Reformation, a new order was necessary to fill their place and do their evil work: and such was found in the Society of Jesus founded by Ignatius Loyola—the Jesuits. But we must take another glance at the early history of monasticism.

* *General Church History*, vol. iii. p. 310. See also *History of the Church* by James Craigie Robertson, vol. i. p. 295.

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THE FIRST SOCIETY OF ASCETICS.

The earliest form in which the ascetic spirit developed itself in the christian church, was not in the formation of societies or communities, as we find in later times, but in the seclusion of single individuals. They believed, however mistaken, that they had a special call to strive after a higher christian life; and in order to attain this eminent holiness, they imposed upon themselves the most severe restraints. They retired to desert places, that they might give themselves up to close meditation on divine things, and that their minds might be entirely abstracted from all natural objects, and from whatever delights the senses. Both men and women supposed that they must emaciate their bodies with watchings, fasting, toil, and self-torture. As the poor body was considered an oppressive load and hindrance to their spiritual aspirations, they vied with each other in the extent to which they could carry their self-mortifications. They existed on the coarsest and most unwholesome diet; they sometimes abstained from food and sleep till nature was almost wholly exhausted. The contagion of this new device of Satan spread far and wide. The mysterious recluse was regarded as necessarily invested with peculiar sanctity. The hermit's cell was visited by the noble, the learned, the devout—all desirous to pay homage to the holy man of God; and thus spiritual pride was engendered by the flattery of the world. From this time the monastic life was held in such esteem, that many adopted it as a highly honourable employment; and afterwards formed themselves into communities, or monastic institutions.

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PACHOMIUS, who was, like Antony, a native of Thebais, was converted to Christianity in the early part of the fourth century. After practising austerities for some time, he was told by an angel in his dreams, that he had made sufficient progress in the monastic life, and must now become a teacher of others. Pachomius then founded a society on an island of the Nile. Thus began ascetics to live in an association. The institution soon extended, so that before the founder's death it embraced eight monasteries, with three thousand monks; and in the beginning of the following century the number of monks was no less than fifty thousand. They lived in cells, each of which contained three. They were under engagements of absolute obedience to the commands of the *Abbot*, or *father*. They wore a peculiar dress, the chief article of which was a goat-skin, in imitation of Elijah, who, with John the Baptist, was regarded as exemplifying the monastic condition. They were never to undress; they slept with their clothes on, and in chairs so constructed as to keep them almost in a standing posture. They prayed many times a-day, fasted on the fourth and sixth days of the week, and communicated on the Sabbath and on the Lord's day. Their meals were eaten in silence, and with their hoods drawn over their faces, so that no one could see his neighbour. They employed themselves in agriculture and various forms of industry, and had all things in common, in imitation of the first Christians after the day of Pentecost.* Pachomius founded similar societies for women.

* Robertson, vol. i. p. 296; Neander, vol. iii. p. 317; Gardner's *Faiths of the World*, vol. ii. p. 473.

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THE MONASTERIES AND THE ROMAN PONTIFF.

Until nearly the close of the fifth century, the monasteries were placed under the superintendence of the bishops; the monks were regarded simply as laymen, and had no claim to be ranked among the sacerdotal order. Circumstances, however, in course of time, led the monks to assume a clerical character. Many of them were occupied in the work of reading and expounding the scriptures, and all of them were supposed to be engaged in the cultivation of the higher spiritual life; so that they were in great favour with the multitude, especially as they began to exercise their clerical functions beyond the confines of their establishments. Jealousies soon sprung up between the bishops and the abbots: the result was, that the abbots, to deliver themselves from dependence upon their spiritual rivals, made application to be taken under the protection of the Pope at Rome. The proposal was gladly accepted, and very quickly all the monasteries, great and small, abbeys, priories, and nunneries, were subjected to the authority of the See of Rome. This was an immense step towards the pontifical power of Rome.

The Pope could now establish in almost every quarter, a kind of spiritual police, who acted as spies on the bishops as well as on the secular authorities. This event is carefully to be noted, if we would watch the ways and means of the rising power, and ultimate supremacy, of the Roman Pontiff.

The monastic system soon spread far beyond the borders of Egypt: and all the great teachers of the age, both in the East and in the West, advocated the cause of celibacy and monasticism. St. Jerome, in particular,

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the most learned man of his day, is regarded as the connecting link between the two great divisions of the church —the Greek and the Roman, or the Eastern and the Western. He was the means of powerfully forwarding the cause of celibacy and monasticism; especially among females. Many Roman ladies of rank became nuns through his influence. AMBROSE so extolled virginity in his sermons, that the mothers of Milan restrained their daughters from attending his ministry; but crowds of virgins from other quarters flocked to him for consecration. BASIL introduced monastic life into Pontus and Cappadocia; MARTIN, into Gaul; AUGUSTINE, into Africa; and CHRYSOSTOM was prevented by the wisdom of his mother, from retiring in his youth to a remote hermitage in Syria.

Before leaving this subject it may be well, once for all, to notice the rise and establishment of nunneries.

THE ORIGIN OF FEMALE RECLUSES.

From an early period of the history of the church, we read of devout virgins, who professed religious chastity, and dedicated themselves to the service of Christ. Their duties and devotions were self-imposed, so that they might preserve their domestic relations, or enter without scandal into the state of marriage. But the origin of communities of female recluses is attributed to Pachomius, the great founder of the regular monastic systems. Before his death, which took place about the middle of the fourth century, no fewer than twenty-seven thousand females in Egypt alone had adopted the monastic life. The rules which he formed for the convents of nuns, were similar to those which bound the monks. "They lived from common funds, used a common dormitory, a table,

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and wardrobe. The same religious services were prescribed; habitual temperance, and occasional fasting were enjoined with the same severity. Manual labour was no less rigidly enforced; but instead of the agricultural toil imposed upon their 'brethren,' to them were committed the easier tasks of the needle or the distaff. By duties so numerous, by occupations admitting so great variety, they beguiled the tediousness of the day, and the dulness of monastic seclusion."*

It is certain that many such establishments were founded during the fourth century, and that they were propagated throughout Egypt, Syria, Pontus, and Greece, and that gradually, they penetrated into every province where the name of Christ was known; and even until now they abound in all Roman Catholic countries, and form a strange and incongruous appendage to the church.

THE CEREMONY OF TAKING THE VOW.

The cruel and merciless spirit of popery is painfully felt, even by her own members, at the consecration of a nun. It is unnatural, unscriptural, an outrage on every feeling of our humanity, ruinous both to soul and body, and could only be submitted to through the blinding power of Satan. What a mercy to be far away from her unaccountable influence and fatal delusions! The following description of the ceremonial of a novice taking the vows, is from the pen of an eye witness of the scene as it took place in Rome; slightly abridged.

"By particular favour we had been furnished with

* Waddington, vol. ii. p. 252.

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billets for the best seats, and, after waiting about half-an-hour, two footmen in rich liveries made way for the young countess, who entered the crowded church in full dress, her dark hair blazing with diamonds. Supported by her mother she advanced to the altar. The officiating priest was Vicario; the discourse from the pulpit was pronounced by a Dominican monk, who addressed her as the affianced spouse of Christ—a saint on earth, one who had renounced the vanities of the world for a foretaste of the joys of heaven.

"The sermon ended, the lovely victim herself, kneeling before the altar, at the feet of the cardinal, solemnly abjured the world whose pleasures and affections she seemed so well calculated to enjoy, and pronounced those vows which severed her from them for ever. As her voice softly chanted those fatal words, I believe there was scarcely an eye in the whole of that vast church unmoistened with tears. The diamonds that sparkled in her hair were taken off, and her long and beautiful tresses fell luxuriantly down her shoulders.

"The grate that was to entomb her was opened. The abbess and her black train of nuns appeared. Their choral voices chanted a strain of welcome. It said, or seemed to say, 'sister spirit, come away!' She renounced her name and title, adopted a new appellation, received the solemn benediction of the cardinal, and the last embraces of her weeping friends, and passed into that bourne from whence she was never to return. A panel behind the other now opened, and she appeared at the grate again. Here she was despoiled of her ornaments and her splendid attire, her beautiful hair was mercilessly severed from her head by the fatal shears of the sisters; enough to make the whole congregation shudder.

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As she was shorn of her natural covering, the sisters hastened to invest her with the sober robes of the nun, the white coif and the noviciate veil.

"Throughout the whole ceremony she shewed great calmness and firmness; and it was not till all was over that her eyes were moistened with tears of natural emotion. She afterwards appeared at the little postern gate of the convent, to receive the sympathy, and praise, and congratulations of all her friends and acquaintances, nay, even of strangers, all of whom are expected to pay their compliments to the new spouse of heaven."*

The description now given refers to the profession of a nun on the taking of the *white veil*, a step which forms the commencement of the noviciate or year of trial, and is not irrevocable. The ceremony of taking the *black veil* at the end of the year is still more solemn and dreadful; but when it has been gone through, she is a recluse for life, and can only be released from her vow by death. In the eye of Roman law, both civil and ecclesiastical, the step she has taken is beyond recall. Imprisonment, torture, death temporal and eternal, are held out as the punishments of disobedience. And who can tell, outside the convent walls, what refined and prolonged cruelties may be practised inside? The power is despotic; there is no appeal; until the deceiver and the deceived, the persecutor and the helpless victim, stand side by side before the righteous tribunal of God.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF ASCETICISM.

It is truly sorrowful to reflect on the many and serious mistakes, or rather positive errors, of the great doctors,

* Gardener's *Faiths of the World.*

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or early fathers, as they are usually called. We know of nothing more grave and solemn than the fact, that they greatly misled the people then, and that by their writings they have been misleading the professing church ever since. Who can estimate the evil consequences of such teaching for the last fourteen hundred years at least? The misinterpretation or the misapplication of the word of God, is evidently the *rule* with these leaders; to teach sound doctrine, the exception. And still they are the boast and the alleged authority of a large portion of Christendom even until now.

On the subject of asceticism, any one having an ordinary acquaintance with scripture, may see their ignorance of the mind of God, and their perversion of His word. We are exhorted, for example, to "mortify the *deeds* of the body," but never to mortify the body itself. The body is the Lord's, and to be cared for. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the members of Christ?" True, they are to be kept *under* and brought into *subjection*, but that is the wisest way of caring for the body. (Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 15; ix. 27.) Again, the apostle says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth;" and then states what these are: "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." These are the *deeds* of the body which we are to mortify—to put to death practically; and that on the ground that the flesh was put to death on the cross. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Not, observe, *are* crucifying it, or *ought* to crucify it, but *have* crucified it. God has put it out of His sight by the cross, and we are to keep it out of sight by self-judgment. The *body*, on the con-

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trary, has a most important place in the New Testament as the temple of the Holy Ghost; but the tendency of asceticism is to starve the body, and feed the flesh. "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." Colossians ii. 23.

The Fathers seem to have overlooked that asceticism was the offspring of heathen philosophy, and not in any way of divine Christianity; but they never fairly looked into scripture for the mind of God on these subjects. The total ruin of man in the flesh not being understood by them, they vainly thought it might be improved, and were thus led astray in ways innumerable; especially as to the work of Christ, God's judgment of the flesh, the true principle of worship, and the whole path of christian service.

Having now seen the foundation laid of the great monastic system, which was to exert so powerful an influence in connection with Christianity, literature, and civilization, throughout the dark ages; we may leave it for the present, and return to our general history.

ARCADIUS AND HONORIUS, A.D. 395.

Theodosius the Great left two sons—Arcadius, aged eighteen years, and Honorius, who was only eleven. The elder succeeded to the sovereignty of the East, the younger to that of the West. Nothing can be more striking than the condition of the Roman world at this moment, or more fitted to excite our compassion. Two Emperors of such weakness as to be incapable of conducting the administration of public affairs, and the whole

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empire in a state of danger and alarm from the Gothic invaders. The hand of the Lord is manifestly here. Where is now the genius, the glory, and the power of Rome? They expired with Theodosius. At a moment when the empire required the prudence, the martial skill, and the talents of a Constantine, it was professedly governed by two imbecile princes. But its days were numbered in the providence of God, it was fast passing away.

The fiercest storm that had ever assailed the empire, was now ready to burst upon it in its hour of weakness. The able general, Stilicho, the only hope of Rome, was assassinated soon after the death of Theodosius, and all Italy lay within the grasp of the barbarians. The Goths had yielded to the arms, and especially to the policy of Theodosius, but it needed only the news of his death to arouse them to revolt and revenge. The famous Alaric, the crafty and able leader of the Goths, only waited for a favourable opportunity to carry out a scheme of greater magnitude and daring than had entered into the mind of any of Rome's enemies since the time of Hannibal. He was, we doubt not, the minister of God's righteous judgments on a people so deeply stained with the blood of His saints, besides having crucified the Lord of glory, and slain His apostles. Details we must leave to the civil historian of Rome's decline and fall: but we may briefly say, that Alaric was now followed, not only by the Goths, but by tribes of almost every name and race. The fury of the desert was now to be poured out on the mistress and corrupter of the world. He led his forces into Greece without opposition; devastated its fruitful lands, and plundered Athens, Corinth, Argos, and Sparta; and that which was impiously called, "the eternal city,"

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he besieged and sacked. For six days she was given up to remorseless slaughter and universal pillage. Thus fell the guilty, the devoted city by the judgment of God: no hand held out to help: no man lamenting her fate. The richest provinces of Europe too, Italy, Gaul, and Spain, were laid waste by the immediate successors of Alaric, especially Attila, and new kingdoms set up by the barbarians. Thus the history of *the fourth great world-empire closes about* A.D. 478, *and in the twelve hundred and twenty-ninth year from the foundation of Rome.*

Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, a prince alike excellent in the arts of war and of government, restored an age of peace and prosperity, swept away all vestiges of the imperial government, and formed Italy into a kingdom.*

REFLECTIONS ON THE CALAMITIES OF ROME.

The christian reader may here find it profitable to pause for a moment and contemplate the overthrow of the Western empire, and the division of its territory amongst the various hordes of the barbarians. It is our privilege and edification to see in all this, the fulfilment and harmony of scripture, the overruling providence of God, and the accomplishment of His purposes. We can also afford to drop the tear of compassion over the miseries of our deluded fellow men. This would be nothing more than the tender compassion of Him who wept over the devoted city Jerusalem. It is our duty to study history by the sure light of scripture; not scripture—as some have attempted—by the uncertain light of history. Thus

* *Encyclop. Brit.* vol. xix. p. 420. White's *Eighteen Christian Centuries*, p. 94.

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we may be happy in the presence of God with the page of history open before us, and our faith strengthened by the mighty contrast between the kingdom of God and all earthly glory. "Wherefore," says the apostle, "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. xii. 28.) The superiority of Christianity to the most powerful of Pagan institutions was now manifest to all. When the overwhelming judgments of God fell upon Italy, and broke in pieces the iron rule of the empire, the church suffered no harm. It was rather shielded, and the means of shielding others, than exposed to danger. Like the ark which rose above the dark waters of the deluge, the church was preserved from the fury of the invader. There was no instance of the barbarians embracing the old religion of Greece and Rome; they either adhered to the superstitions of their ancestors, or adopted some form of Christianity. There is no sure footing for the sinner amidst the convulsions of earth, the rise and fall of empires, but the Rock of Ages—the risen and exalted Christ of God. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (Psalm ii. 12.) The Lord provided for the safety of His people, by the previous conversion of those who subverted the empire.

THE CONVERSION OF THE BARBARIANS.

It is always interesting and edifying to trace the hand of the Lord in turning the wrath of man to His own praise, and in bringing the greatest good to His own people out of that which appears to be their heaviest calamity. In the reign of Gallienus, about 268, a great number of Roman provincials had been led away into

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captivity by the Gothic bands; many of these captives were Christians, and several belonged to the ecclesiastical order. They were dispersed by their masters as *slaves* in the villages; but as *missionaries* by the Lord. They preached the gospel to the barbarous people, and numbers were converted. Their increase and order may be inferred from the fact that they were represented at the Nicene council by a bishop named Theophilus.

ULPHILAS, who is commonly called "the Apostle of the Goths," has deserved the grateful remembrance of posterity, but especially of Christians. About the middle of the fourth century, he invented an alphabet and translated the scriptures into the Gothic language, with the exception of the books of Samuel and Kings, lest their warlike contents should be found too congenial to the ferocity of the barbarians. At first they appear to have been simple and orthodox in their faith, but afterwards became deeply tinged with Arianism, especially after the Arian ministers, who were ejected from their churches by Theodosius, had laboured diligently amongst them.

Alaric and his Goths were professed Christians; they directed their wrath against the heathen temples, but greatly reverenced the churches. This was the great mercy of God to His people; numbers of whom fled to the churches, where they found a sanctuary. The earnest faith and the indefatigable zeal of Ulphilas, together with his blameless life, had gained the love and confidence of the people. They received in faith the doctrines of the gospel, which he preached and practised: so that the first invaders of the empire had previously learnt in their own land to profess, or at least to respect, the religion of the vanquished. And herein we see the truth, or rather the

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fulfilment of the Apostle's words in his Epistle to the Romans: "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek;" and again, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise." The learned citizens of the Roman empire, and the rude inhabitants of Scythia and Germany, were alike brought under the saving power of the gospel.

THE CONVERSION OF CLOVIS.

As the conversion of Clovis is said to have been the most important in the fifth century, we must give a few particulars of the event—important, we mean, as to its consequences, both immediate and remote, on the history of Europe, and so far of the church.

The Franks, a people of Germany, had settled in the north of France, near Cambray; a most religious part of the country, rendered famous by the shrine of Saint Martin of Tours, and by the legendary virtues of other saints. Clovis was a pagan, but Clotilda, his wife, had embraced the Catholic faith. She had long urged him to become a Christian, but he was slow to believe. At length, however, when engaged in battle with the Alemanni, and finding himself in danger, he thought of Clotilda's God, and prayed to Him; declaring that his old gods had failed him, and vowing to become a Christian if he should gain the victory. The tide of battle turned; his enemies were defeated; and true to his vow, at Christmas, 496, Clovis was baptized at Rheims by the bishop, Remigius. Three thousand warriors followed his example, declaring their readiness to be of the same religion as their king.

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Here we have another Constantine. Clovis found the profession of Christianity most favourable to his political interests, but it produced no change for the better in his life. His object was conquest, his ambition was boundless, his deeds were daring and cruel. From being only a Frankish chief with a small territory, he became the founder of the great French monarchy. And from his confession of the Catholic faith, and his alliance with the Roman Pontiff, he was acknowledged champion of Catholicism, and declared to be the only orthodox sovereign in the West: all the others were Arians. Alaric who conquered Rome, Genseric who conquered Africa, Theodoric the Great who became king of Italy, and many of the Lombard kings, were Arians. Hence the kings of France derive from Clovis the title of "eldest Son of the Church."

To the student of prophecy it is interesting to see, that by this time at least five or six barbarian kings were in possession of the Roman provinces, and ruled over what had been the Latin empire. But that had passed away. It had died as an empire, and must remain in the place of death until resuscitated, according to the word of the Lord, in the latter day. Revelation xiii., xvii.

Before concluding the Pergamos period, we find it will be necessary to notice, however briefly, three things —the internal state of the church, the Pelagian and Nestorian controversies.

RITES AND CEREMONIES.

The more general adoption of Christianity, as will easily be imagined, was followed by an increase of splendour in all that concerned the worship of God, so-called.

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Churches were built and adorned with greater cost; the officiating clergy were attired in richer dresses; the music became more elaborate, and many new ceremonies were introduced. And these usages were then justified on the same ground that we find the high church party justifying the extraordinary rites and ceremonies of the present day.* It was intended to recommend the gospel to the heathen by ceremonies which might surpass those of their old religion. Multitudes were drawn into the church then, as they are now, without any sufficient understanding of their new position, and with minds still possessed of heathen notions, and corrupted by heathen morality. Even in the earliest days of Christianity we find irregularities in the church at Corinth, through the unforgotten practices of the heathen. The burning of candles in daylight, incense, images, processions, lustrations, and innumerable other things, were introduced in the fourth and fifth centuries. For, as Mosheim observes, "While the good-will of the Emperors aimed to advance the christian religion, the indiscreet piety of the bishops obscured its true nature and oppressed its energies, by the multiplication of rites and ceremonies."†

THE DEGENERATING INFLUENCE OF RITUALISM.

The tendency of all ecclesiastical ritualism is to produce a spirit of superstition to the subversion of faith, of mere formality to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and of resting in our own good works to the rejection of the finished work of Christ. The word of God is thus

* See *The Church and the World*, 1866.

† *Eccles. His.* vol. i. p. 366. Murdock and Soames. Robertson, vol. i. p. 316.

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practically set aside, the Holy Spirit grieved, and the heart laid open to the inroads of Satan. When faith is in lively exercise, the word of God strictly followed, and the promised guidance of the Comforter relied upon, the soul is strong and vigorous in the divine life, and the suggestions of the enemy unheeded. Satan is a keen observer of the different states of the believer's soul, and of the professing church. He knows when he will be successful in his attempts against the individual believer or the church: he waits his time—he watches his opportunity. When he sees the mind taking a wrong direction, he soothes, flatters, stimulates—solemn thought for us all!

THE PELAGIAN HERESY.

The condition of the church in the beginning of the fifth century gave the adversary an opportunity to bring in a new heresy, which introduced a fresh controversy that has continued with more or less violence from that day even until now. This was *Pelagianism*. The great heresy, Arianism, which had hitherto agitated the church, originated in the East and related to the Godhead of Christ; one was now to arise in the West, which had for its subject the nature of man after the fall and his relations to God. The last misrepresented the lost sinner; the first, the divine Saviour.

Pelagius is said to have been a monk of the great monastery of Bangor, in Wales; and probably the first Briton who distinguished himself as a theologian. His real name was Morgan. His follower, Celestius, is supposed to have been a native of Ireland. Augustine speaks of him as younger than Pelagius—bolder and less crafty. These two companions in error visited Rome,

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where they became intimate with many persons of ascetic and saintly reputation, and disseminated their opinions with caution and in privacy; but after the siege in the year 410 they passed into Africa, where they more openly advanced their opinions.

It does not appear that Pelagius was animated by any desire to form a new doctrinal system, but rather to oppose what he considered moral indolence, and a worldly spirit among his brethren. Hence he maintained that man possessed inherent power for doing the will of God, and for reaching the highest degree of holiness. In this way his theological views were to a great extent formed and determined. But utterly false as they are, they were only consistent with his rigid asceticism, and its native fruit. As scripture undeniably refers all good in man to the grace of God, Pelagius too, in a sense of his own, acknowledges this; but his ideas of divine grace were really nothing more than outward means to call forth man's efforts: a work of heavenly grace in the heart, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, he did not think were needed. This led him to teach that the sin of our first parents had injured no one but themselves; that man is now born as innocent as Adam was when God created him, and possessed of the same moral power and purity. These doctrines, and such as are connected with them, especially the idea of man's Free Will, "an unbiassed power of choosing between good and evil," Pelagius and his colleague, Celestius, secretly disseminated in Rome, Sicily, Africa, and Palestine; but, excepting in the East, the novel opinions were generally condemned. There, John, bishop of Jerusalem, who considered the doctrines of Pelagius as agreeing with the opinions of Origen, to which John was attached, patronized Pelagius, allowed

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him to profess his sentiments freely, and to gather disciples.*

AUGUSTINE AND DIVINE GRACE.

AUGUSTINE, the famous bishop of Hippo, the great evangelic light of the West, and the most influential of all the Latin christian writers, began about this time to

* The fundamental error of the monk Pelagius was the denial of our total corruption by sin derived from Adam, and met only by the death and resurrection of the second Man, the last Adam. Hence he asserted liberty as now true of all men, not merely in the sense of exemption from external restraint, but of freedom within the nature as to good and evil. denying thus in the race internal bondage to sin. So he appears to have seen little more in grace, even in its christian application, than pardon for this or that offence, not the impartation to the believer of a new nature, in virtue of which he does not practise sin, because he is born of God. Thus no room was left in the Pelagian scheme for man being lost now on the one side, or for the believer being saved now on the other. In fact the race was conceived to be in an innocence like the primeval state of Adam till each sinned and thus fell under guilt and its consequences. The Pelagians denied the imputation of Adam's sin, seeing no more than the influence of a bad example. As the moral ruin of man was thus enfeebled and the relation of the head lost, so on the other hand under grace were reckoned all the natural endowments of the human family, as well as the supernatural. Hence conscience, law, and gospel were regarded as different methods, as well as advancing stages of righteousness, in every case the means and operations of grace being effectual only according to the measure of the tendencies of the will. Again, the redemption of Christ became thus, if not an amelioration, certainly an exaltation and transfiguration of humanity. Christ Himself was but the highest pattern of righteousness, some before Him having perfectly kept the moral law, and others since being stimulated by His work, love, and example to the evangelical counsels of moral perfection beyond law.—W. K.

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assail with his pen the doctrines of Pelagius and Celestius; and to him chiefly is due, as God's instrument, the credit of checking the growth of this sect at that time. By a remarkable conversion, and by deep exercise of soul, he had been trained under the Lord's discipline, for this great work. Thus did the all-wise God secretly raise up a testimony in opposition to Pelagius, and by means of his heresy, bring out more scriptural views of the gospel of grace than had been taught since the days of the apostles; and also fuller views of christian truth, holiness and humility. The Western churches, led on by Augustine, continued perseveringly to assail the false doctrines with councils, books, and letters. The Gauls, the Britons, and even the Palestinians, by their councils, and the Emperors by their laws and penalties, so far crushed the controversy in its commencement; but the fundamental principles of Pelagianism in many forms and degrees remain to the present time. Rather, however, than pursue the history of this heresy, we will briefly refer to what the scriptures teach on the two main points of the subject.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONDITION OF MAN AND THE GRACE OF GOD.

If mere human reason be allowed in this controversy, it must be interminable; but if the authority of the word of God be owned, it is soon settled. That there is something good in fallen human nature, and that man, as such, has power to choose what is good, and reject what is evil, lie at the root of Pelagianism in its numerous forms. The total ruin of man is denied, and all ideas of divine grace that appear inconsistent with man's free will are excluded from their system. But what saith

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the scripture? A single line of God's word satisfies the man of faith. And this ought to be the only argument of the teacher, the evangelist, and the private Christian. We must always take the ground of faith against all adversaries.

In Genesis vi. God gives His estimate of fallen human nature. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God could find nothing in man but evil, and evil without cessation. Again, in the same chapter, we read, "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Not *some* flesh, observe, but *all* flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Here we have God's judgment of nature; but at the same time, He reveals His sovereign grace to meet the condition of man as thus judged. God provides an ark of salvation, and then sends forth the free invitation, come—"Come thou and all thy house into the ark." The cross is the standing witness, and the grand expression, of the great truths shadowed forth by the ark. There we have in a way, as nowhere else, God's judgment of human nature with all its evil; and at the same time, the revelation of His love and grace in all their fulness and saving power.*

But all scripture is consistent with Genesis vi. and the cross of Christ. Take, for example, Romans v. and Ephesians ii. In the former we are said to be "without strength," but in the latter, that we are "dead," dead in trespasses and sins. The apostle, in an earlier part of his Epistle to the Romans, most carefully proves the ruin of

* For details see *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, p. 81.

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man and the righteousness of God; here we have His love displayed in the great fact of the death of Christ for us. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." But why say the "*due time?*" Because man had been fully proved to be not only "*ungodly*," but "without strength" to do one good thing Godward, or move one step in that direction. Under the law God shewed man the way, appointed means, gave him a long trial; but he was powerless to come out of his sad condition as a sinner. How humbling, but how wholesome the truth of God! It is good to know our lost condition. How different to the false theology, and the proud philosophy of men! But on God's part, blessed be His name, man's state (so demonstrated) was just the opportunity for the manifestation of His saving grace; and for such Jesus died. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now man has to do either with God's judgment in unbelief, or with His salvation by faith. There is no middle path. The fullest proof of our lost condition and of God's gracious love is, "that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans v. 6–10.

In Ephesians ii. it is not merely a question of man's moral disease, but of his *death*. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." In Romans, man is viewed as powerless, godless, a sinner, and an enemy; here, as morally dead: and this is the worst kind of death, for it is the very spring of the most active wickedness. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." What a blow to man's

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boasted *unbiassed power* of choosing between good and evil! Here, on the contrary, he is viewed as under the government of demons—as the slave of Satan. Man will much more readily admit that he is godless than that he is powerless. He will boast of having his own opinion—of being independent and quite able to judge and choose for himself in spiritual things.

It was one of the favourite dogmas of Pelagius, if not the foundation of his system, "That as man has ability to sin, so has he also not only ability to discern what is good, but likewise power to desire it and to perform it. And this is the freedom of the will, which is so essential to man that he cannot lose it." We refer to this false notion, simply because it so cleaves to the natural mind, and is most difficult to get rid of even after we are converted, and is always a great hindrance to the work of God's grace in the soul. Seeing man is dead in his sins, God and His own work must be everything. Of course there is great variety amongst men naturally, when they are "fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." Some are benevolent and moral, some living in gross and open wickedness, and some may be gratifying a kind and feeling heart: but from what motive? To do the will of God? Certainly not! God is not in all their thoughts. They are energized by the spirit of Satan, and driven by him according to the course of this world. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Luke xvi. 13.

HOW IS MAN RESPONSIBLE?

But where, it may be asked, and in what way does

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man's responsibility come in? Surely man is responsible to own that God is true, and to accept as just, however humiliating, His judgment of his nature and character. "If we believe the witness of man, the witness of God is greater." Take up the dark picture which God has drawn of man, and say, That is myself, that is what I have done and what I am. Salvation is by faith; not by willing, choosing, doing, but by believing. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. . . . And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world; and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 16–19.

Who can fail to see that a responsibility is created by this display of divine goodness in Christ, and that of the most obvious, solemn, and weighty character? So much so indeed, that the evidence is decisive and final, and the unbeliever judged before God. It is not a question, observe, of their not finding forgiveness, but of their preferring darkness to light, that they may continue in sin. This is what God lays to their charge, and could there be a more just or reasonable ground of condemnation? Impossible. May it be the happy lot of all who read these pages, to bow to the humiliating sentence of scripture upon our nature, and to take the ground of lost sinners in the sight of God. So shall an all-merciful and gracious God meet us in the greatness of His love, and bless us with all that is due to Christ as the Saviour of mankind.

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THE NESTORIANS.

As the sect, called Nestorians, occupy an important place in church history, we must briefly notice its formation. They are sometimes called Syrians, their founder being a Syrian. They are numerous, we believe, in Syria at the present time; but they have not received from the Turkish government that protection to which they are entitled; and hence they have been exposed to frequent assaults from the predatory tribes. Thousands of the Nestorians in the mountains of Kurdistan, including men, women, and children, were massacred, in 1843, and their villages utterly destroyed, by the Kurdish tribes. Since the year 1834 an interesting mission has been established among them by the American Board of Foreign Missions. The character and proceedings of the mission are highly spoken of. Dr. Grant, one of the missionaries, who resided among the Nestorians for a considerable time, and had studied their manners and customs with the greatest minuteness and care, published a treatise with the view of proving that this interesting class of people are the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel. But his conclusions, like others on the same subject, may well be doubted.*

NESTORIUS, a Syrian monk, became a presbyter of the church at Antioch. He was esteemed and celebrated on account of the rigid austerity of his life, and the impressive fervour of his preaching. He attracted large and attentive audiences, and soon became a great favourite with the people. In the year 428 he was consecrated

* See Gardner's *Faiths of the World*, vol. ii. p. 531.

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patriarch of Constantinople. But the discipline of the cloister had ill prepared him for so important a position in public life. No sooner was he promoted to this elevation than he began to display an intemperate zeal against the various descriptions of heretics, which partook more of the bigotry of the monk than of the gentle forbearing spirit of genuine Christianity. In his inaugural discourse, addressing the Emperor, Theodosius the younger, he gave utterance to these violent expressions, "Give me a country purged of all heretics, and in exchange for it, I will give you heaven. Help me to subdue the heretics, and I will help you to subdue the Persians." But it was not long till Nestorius himself was also accused of heresy.

The new bishop soon followed up his declaration of war against the heretics by deeds of violence and persecution. He excited tumults among the people: the Arians were attacked, their meeting-house burnt down; and other sects were persecuted. Such proceedings, however, soon raised up against Nestorius, even amongst the orthodox, a numerous host of enemies, who sought and soon accomplished his downfall. It happened in this way.

ANASTASIUS AND MARIOLATRY.

ANASTASIUS, a presbyter who had accompanied Nestorius from Antioch, and was his intimate friend, attacked, in a public discourse, the use of the expression, *Mother of God*, as applied to the Virgin Mary. The term thus violently opposed had on its side the authority of ancient usage, and many names of great weight with the people. Nestorius approved the discourse, supported his friend, and in several addresses explained and

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defended his attack. Many were pleased with these discourses, and many were stirred up against Nestorius and his friend: the excitement at Constantinople was immense, but the cry of *heresy, heresy*, arose, and the flames of a great and painful controversy were kindled.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NESTORIUS AND HIS OPPONENTS.

Never was there a doctrinal strife in which the contending parties approximated so closely. Both subscribed, both appealed to, the Nicene creed: both believed in the absolute Godhead and the perfect manhood of the Lord Jesus; but it was inferred by the enemies of Nestorius, especially by *Cyril*, that he was unsound as to the *incarnation* from his objecting to the term, "mother of God." The meaning or import of the disputed term, as used by the doctors in the preceding century, was not to imply that the Virgin communicated the divine nature to the Saviour, but to affirm the union of Godhead and manhood in one Person—that "the child born, the son given," was God *incarnate*. It was attributed to Nestorius, that he maintained the mere humanity of the Redeemer, and that the Spirit only dwelt in Him, after He became a man, as of old in the prophets. But Nestorius, as long as he lived, professed himself utterly opposed to such sentiments. Nor does it appear that such sentiments were ever directly made by him, but only inferred by his adversaries from his rejection of the epithet, *Mother of God*, and from some incautious and ambiguous terms which he used in his public discourses on the subject.

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CYRIL AND ORTHODOXY.

CYRIL, bishop of Alexandria, in the controversy which had thus arisen, appears as the great champion of orthodoxy. But all historians agree in giving him a most unorthodox character. He is accused of being moved with jealousy because of the increasing power and authority of the bishop of Constantinople; and of being restless, arrogant, and unscrupulous in his ways. He was also as violent against the heretics, as Nestorius. He persecuted the Novatianists, and expelled the Jews from Alexandria. An honest and pious zeal may have animated these great prelates, but they utterly failed in uniting with their zeal christian prudence and moderation; and too readily allied with it the worst passions of human nature.

Cyril was first drawn into the controversy by finding that copies of Nestorius' sermons had been circulated among his monks in Egypt, and that they had abandoned the term, Mother of God. He at once blamed both the monks and Nestorius, and denounced the novelty as heretical. All parties were soon excited, and angry words were used by all parties which need not now be repeated: suffice it to say, that when Nestorius found that Cyril had skilfully managed to secure the influence of Celestine, bishop of Rome, and that he was beset with other difficulties, he appealed to a general council. As some of his opponents had already petitioned for such an assembly, it was agreed to, and the Emperor Theodosius issued orders for the meeting of one at Ephesus in the year 431, which is called the THIRD GENERAL COUNCIL. They met in June. Cyril, in virtue of the dignity of his See, presided. Matters went against Nestorius. He

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was condemned as guilty of blasphemy, deprived of the episcopal dignity, cut off from all part in the priesthood, and sent into banishment, in which he closed his days about the year 450.

About two hundred bishops signed the sentence against Nestorius; still, it remains a question with most of the historians, whether he was really guilty of holding the errors for which he was condemned. But all are agreed that he was rash and intemperate in his language, vain of his own eloquence, disregarded the writings of the earlier Fathers, and was apt to see heresy in everything that differed from the dogmatic phraseology which he had been accustomed to in his youth. But it is difficult to determine which was the principal cause of this great contest, *Cyril* or *Nestorius*.*

THE CLOSE OF THE PERGAMOS PERIOD.

The council of Ephesus was far from putting an end to these disgraceful contentions; in place of restoring harmony to the church, it rather increased her troubles. John, bishop of Antioch, and other Eastern prelates, judged Cyril and his friends to have acted most unfairly and with unbecoming haste in the matter of Nestorius; hence arose a new controversy, and out of which sprang a new heresy—*Eutychianism*—which greatly troubled the Eastern churches for about twenty years.

EUTYCHES, abbot of a convent at Constantinople, in the eagerness of his opposition to Nestorianism, ran into the opposite extreme. He was accused of unsoundness on the doctrines of the incarnation, and denounced as a

* Landon's *Manual of Councils*, p. 225; Neander, vol. iv. p. 141; Mosheim, vol. i. p. 468.

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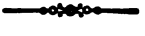
heretic. This led to another council which was held at Chalcedon in the year 451, and is called, THE FOURTH GENERAL COUNCIL. But the details of these local contests fall not within the limits of our "Short Papers." Our plan is to give the reader a distinct outline, in the smallest space possible; and only to give a few details in cases where the name of the person has become a synonym for the opinions he taught; such as Arius, Pelagius, &c., or when the events, such as the great persecutions, have a claim on the sympathy of the church throughout all ages.

In carrying out these purposes, it will now be necessary to turn our attention more especially to the growing power and the lofty pretensions of the church of Rome. In Leo the Great, we may see the passing away of the Pergamos period, and the approach of the papal monarchy. But before venturing on these troubled waters, we shall do well to study our divine chart—God's prophetic history of the church during that dark and often stormy period.



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CHAPTER XIII.

THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA.

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, [and unto] the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be

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broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Revelation ii. 18–29.

It requires but little spiritual discernment, we think, and a very moderate acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, to see the popery of the middle ages foreshadowed in this epistle. We saw in Ephesus the decline of first love, in Smyrna persecution from the Roman power, in Pergamos Balaam seducing the church and uniting her to the world; but things are even worse in Thyatira. Here we have the sad but natural consequences of this unhallowed union. How could it be otherwise, when all who merely submitted to the outward rite of baptism were regarded as born of God? The door was thus thrown open for the spoiler and the corrupter to enter the sacred enclosure of the church of God. All testimony was now gone as to her heavenly character and her place of separation from the world. She had falsified the word of the Lord which says of His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." True, in appearance, Christianity had gained a victory. The cross was now arrayed in gold and precious stones; but this was the glory of the world, not of a crucified Christ. It was the world really that gained the victory, and the humiliation of the church was completed.

The Lord only could estimate the fearful consequences of such a state of things. His eye saw the corruptions, the idolatries, and the persecutions of the so-called dark ages, of which the church in Thyatira was a remarkable foreshadowing. We will now glance briefly at the contents of the epistle.

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1. The *titles* of the Lord are first to be noticed. They are full of the most suited instruction for the faithful few, when the general body of Christians are identified with this world. He introduces Himself as the Son of God, who has eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass. When Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, He immediately added, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And now, in anticipation of all that was coming, He recalls the thoughts of His people to that immutable foundation on which the church is built. He also assumes the attributes of divine judgment. *Fire* is the symbol of *penetrating* judgment; *eyes*, like unto a flame of fire, of *all-searching* judgment; and *burnished brass*, of *impending* judgment.

Here then we have, in the character which the blessed Lord takes, the assurance of the perfect security of the faithful remnant, and the assertion of the unfailing judgment of the false prophetess, and her numerous brood of corrupt children—children of her seduction and corruption. Jezebel was not only a prophetess but a mother: she not only seduced God's people by her false doctrines, slaying many of them also; but a large class of the worst of men derived their existence from her corruption. This is painfully manifest all through the dark ages—the Jezebel-state of the church. She established herself *within* the church as in her own house, and published to all the world that she was infallible and to be implicitly obeyed in all matters of faith. To acquiesce in this blasphemous assumption was unfaithfulness to Christ; to oppose it was suffering and death.

2. As the pretensions of Rome waxed louder and

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louder, and the darkness grew thicker and thicker, many of the saints of God became more and more devoted to Christ and His claims. *What is due to Christ* must ever be the watchword of the Christian, not what is due to those in high stations. There seems to have been a spiritual energy displayed at this time which rises above all that had been seen since the days of the apostles. This is grace—the marvellous grace of God to His real saints in a most trying time. It is the *silver line* of His own love which is so precious in His sight. We may not always be able to trace it in ecclesiastical history, but there it is, and there it shines to the eye and the heart of God in the midst of abounding iniquity. This is to be noted, and always to be remembered, as most encouraging to the Christian when placed in circumstances of trial. Hear what the Lord Himself says—

"*I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*" Here we have love, faith, and hope, in lively exercise, the three great foundation principles of sound practical Christianity; and the last works to be more than the first. We have not met with such a faithful testimony, or such a measure of devotedness, since the early days of the church in Thessalonica. It may be, however, that the surrounding wickedness made their faithfulness all the more precious to the heart of the Lord, and led Him to praise them more. But no heart that beats true to Himself in an evil day is unknown, unnoticed, or unrewarded.

3. But though the Lord loves to praise what He can in His people, and notice the good things before He speaks of the evil things, He is also quick-sighted in detecting their failures. They were in danger of tam-

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pering with the false doctrine and with the false religious system of Jezebel; so He says,

"I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." (Ver. 20.) Notwithstanding the faithfulness of many earnest souls in Thyatira (or, in the mediæval church), there was the public allowance of the spirit of evil. "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel." This was the dark shade on the *silver line:* sometimes the latter seems completely obscured. But the Lord did not fail, as of old, to raise up suited witnesses for Himself. Just as there were saints in Cæsar's household, an Obadiah in the house of Ahab, and a faithful remnant in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so the Lord was never left without a faithful witness all through the middle ages. Nevertheless, there was an allowance of evil in the general state of things, which grieved the heart of the Lord and brought down His judgments.

"The woman," it may be well to observe, is used as a symbol of the *general state;* "the man," it is said, is a symbol of *responsible activity.* Balaam and Jezebel are symbolic names—a prophet and prophetess. The former acted as a seducer among the saints; the latter established herself within the professing church, and pretended to have absolute authority there. This was going much farther than even the wickedness of Balaam. But we all know what Jezebel was when she sat as queen in Israel. Her name has come down to us as swathed in cruelties and blood. She hated and persecuted the witnesses of God; she encouraged and patronised the idolatrous priests and prophets of Baal; she

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added violence to corruption: all was ruin and confusion. And this is the name which the Lord has chosen to symbolize the general state of the professing church during the middle ages. In Thyatira He, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, could see the germ of that which was to bear such evil fruit in after days, and so warns His people to hold fast that which they have already, even Himself. "I will put upon you none other burden; but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." As the Jezebel-state continues to the end and can never get right, the Lord now directs the faith of the remnant to His own return—"Till I come." The bright hope of His coming is thus presented as a comfort to the heart in the midst of the general ruin; and His saints are relieved by the Lord Himself from all attempts to set either the church or the world right. Most merciful deliverance! But poor human nature cannot understand this, and so tries, and tries again, to mend matters both in church and state.

4. We have evidently three classes of persons spoken of in this epistle. (1.) The children of Jezebel—those who owe their christian name and place to her corrupt system. Unsparing judgment will overtake all such. Space had been given for repentance, but they repented not; therefore the full judgment of God falls upon them. "I will kill her children with death." (2.) Those who are not her children but make no stand against her; they are easy-going. This alas! is a large class in our own day. It characterizes the public state of Christendom. Without conscience before God, they are content to float smoothly down the stream, in fellowship with some religious system, most agreeable to their own minds. As to whether it is agreeable to God's mind,

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they have never inquired. Still they are His children. The judgment of such is "great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." (3.) The faithful remnant, the "*overcomers*." They are here addressed as "the rest," or remnant; they will have power over the nations in association with Christ when He comes to reign. In the meantime, they have this sweet and precious promise; "And I will give him the morning star." This is conscious association with Himself even now. The mediæval church was especially guilty of two things: she arrogantly and wickedly sought to possess supreme power over the nations; and she persecuted the faithful remnant of the saints, such as the Waldenses and others. But the saints, once so persecuted, shall yet possess the kingdom, and reign with Christ a thousand years; and the whole system of Jezebel shall be utterly and for ever rejected—utterly and for ever cast into the lake of fire.

5. There is only one other thing to notice in this sketch of the public state of Christendom since the commencement of the papal system. The exhortation to "hear" is placed *after* the special promise. This marks out the remnant as distinct and separate from the general body. In the first three churches the warning word—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"—comes before the promise; but in the four concluding churches we have the promise before the call to hear. The obvious meaning of this change is deeply solemn. In the first three the call to hear is addressed to the whole assembly, but in the last four only to the remnant. It would seem that none are expected to hear but the overcomers. The general professing body seem both blind and deaf through the power of Satan and the pollutions of Jezebel: fearful

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condition! We must also bear in mind, that the four states as represented by the last four churches run on to the end or to the coming of the Lord. May He keep us from all that savours of Jezebel, that we may duly appreciate our oneness with Himself, and His promised blessings to the "*overcomers*."

Having now briefly examined the divinely drawn picture of the Jezebel-state of the church during the dark ages, we turn to the ample but dreary records of its history.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PAPAL PERIOD.

It is generally admitted that this period begins with the pontificate of Gregory the Great, 590, and ends with the Reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century. But before entering on the general history, we will endeavour to answer a question which has been asked, and which, we doubt not, is on the minds of many: When, and by what means, did the power fall into the hands of the Roman pontiffs, which led to their supremacy and despotism during the middle ages? The question is an interesting one, but to answer it fully would lead us beyond our limits. We can only point out a few facts in the chain of events which laid the foundation of the great power and sovereignty of the See of Rome.

From the time of the famous edict of Milan in 313 the history of the church changes in its character. She then passed from a condition of distress and persecution to the summit of worldly prosperity and honour: other questions besides those of Christianity were henceforth involved in her history. Having entered into an alliance with the State, her future path was necessarily formed

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by her new relations. She could no longer act simply in the name of the Lord Jesus, and according to His holy word. But complete amalgamation there could never be. The one was from heaven, the other of this world. They are, in nature, opposed to each other. Either the church aspired to be the mistress of the State, or the State encroached on the province of the church and disregarded her inherent rights. This was exactly what took place. Soon after the death of Constantine the struggle between these two great powers, the church and the State, for the government of the world commenced; and, in order to ensure success in this warfare, the Roman pontiffs had recourse to ways and means which we will not characterize here, as they will come before us in due course.

Before Constantine transferred the seat of empire to Byzantium, and built Constantinople, Rome was the acknowledged metropolis, and her bishop the primate. But when Constantinople became the imperial city, her bishop was raised to the rank of patriarch, and soon began to lay claim to the dignity of the Roman pontiffs. This was the commencement of the Greek church as a separate communion, and of the long contest between the East and the West. There were now four patriarchs, according to the plan of the Emperor, Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria. The rank of the bishop was governed by the superiority of the city in which he presided; and as Constantinople was now the capital of the world, her bishops would yield to none in honour and magnificence. The others were jealous, Rome complained, the strife began, the breach widened; but Rome never rested until she had gained the ascendency over her feeble and less ambitious rival.

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THE ADVANTAGES OF ROME.

The court of Constantinople, although it may have encouraged the hopes and ambition of the bishops, affected to govern the church with despotic power, and to decide on religious controversies of the gravest kind. But in the West it was not so. The Roman pontiffs from this period shewed the independent and aggressive spirit of popery which rose to such heights in after ages. The bishops of the East were thus placed at a disadvantage in consequence of their dependence on the court and of their quarrels with the emperors. Besides, the presence and grandeur of the Eastern sovereign kept the dignity of the bishop in a very secondary place. In Rome there were none left to dispute the rank or style of the pontiff.

The withdrawal of the emperors from Rome as the royal residence was thus favourable to the development of the ecclesiastical power there; for though deserted by her rulers she was still venerated as the real capital of the world. Hence Rome possessed many advantages as the seat of the supreme bishop. But that which chiefly pushed on and consolidated the power of the Roman See was the growing belief, all over Christendom, that St. Peter was its founder. The Roman bishops denied that their precedence originated in the imperial greatness of the city, but in their lineal descent from St. Peter. This dogma was generally received about the commencement of the fifth century.

By such arguments the church of Rome established her right to govern the universal church. She maintained that Peter was primate amongst the apostles, and

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that his primacy is inherited by the bishops of Rome. But it may be well to notice here, the twofold aspect of Romanism—ecclesiastical and political. In both characters she claimed supremacy. Ecclesiastically she maintained, 1, that the bishop of Rome is the infallible judge in all questions of doctrine; 2, that he has the inherent right to supreme government, in assembling general councils, and presiding over them; 3, that the right of making ecclesiastical appointments belongs to him; 4, that separation from the communion of the church of Rome involves the guilt of schism. Politically she claimed, she aspired to, and gained pre-eminence and power over all European society as well as all European governments. We shall see abundant proof of these particulars in the course of her well-defined history, which we will now go on with.

It was not till after the first council of Nice that the supremacy of the Romish bishops was generally allowed. The early bishops of Rome are scarcely known in ecclesiastical history. The accession of Innocent I. in the year 402 gave force and definition to this new tenet of the Latin church. Till this time there had been no legal recognition of the supremacy of Rome, though it was considered the principal church in the West, and had been frequently appealed to by the other great bishops for a spiritual judgment in matters of dispute. When the Greek church fell into Arianism, the Latin adhered firmly to the Nicene creed, which raised her much in the opinion of all the West. "Upon the mind of Innocent," says Milman, "appears first to have dawned the vast conception of Rome's universal ecclesiastical supremacy; dim as yet and shadowy, but full and comprehensive in its outline."

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LEO THE FIRST SURNAMED THE GREAT.

We may proceed without interruption from the name of Innocent to that of Leo, who ascended the chair of St. Peter in the year 440, and occupied it for one-and-twenty years. He was remarkable for his political skill, theological learning, and great ecclesiastical energy. He maintained with the haughtiness of the Roman, and with the zeal of the churchman, that all the pretensions and all the practices of his church were matters of unbroken apostolical succession. But withal he seems to have been sound in the faith as to salvation, and zealously opposed to all heretics. The Eastern churches had lost the respect of Christendom from their long and disgraceful controversies. Power, not subtleties, was the ambition of Rome. Leo condemned the whole race of heretics from Arius to Eutyches; but more especially the Manichæan heresy.

By his great exertions and extraordinary genius he raised the claims of the Roman bishop, as the representative of St. Peter, to a height before unknown. "The apostle," he says, "was called *Petra*, the rock, by which denomination he is constituted the foundation. . . . In his chair dwelleth the ever living, the superabounding, authority. Let the brethren therefore acknowledge that he is the primate of all bishops, and that Christ, who denieth His gifts to none, yet giveth unto none except through him."*

Making due allowance for the character of the times and for official and inherited opinions, we believe Leo was sincere in his convictions, and probably a Christian.

* Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri*, vol. i. p. 348.

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At heart he cared for God's people, and more than once, by his prayers and political sagacity, saved Rome from the barbarians. When Attila, the most terrible of the foreign conquerors, with his countless hosts, was hovering over Italy, ready to fall upon the defenceless capital, Leo went forth to the "Destroyer" in the name of the Lord, and as the spiritual head of Rome; and so earnestly did he pray for his people, that the wild passions of the Hun were soothed, and to the astonishment of all he agreed to terms by which the city was saved from havoc and slaughter. But his main object through life, and that which he fully accomplished, was to lay the ground-work of the great spiritual monarchy of Rome. During his pontificate he had the greatest name in the empire, if not in all Christendom. He died in the year 461.

THE EMPEROR JUSTINIAN.

The name of Justinian is so famous in history, and so connected with legislation both civil and ecclesiastical, that it would be unfair to our readers to pass it without a notice, though not immediately of the Latin church. He belonged to the East and rather hindered the rise of the West.

In the year 527 Justinian ascended the throne of Constantinople, and occupied it for nearly forty years. The political and military affairs of the empire he committed to his ministers and generals, and devoted his own time to those things which he thought more important. He spent much of his time in theological studies, and in the regulation of the religious affairs of his subjects, such as prescribing what the priests and the people should believe and practise. He was fond of mixing in

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controversy and of acting as a lawgiver in religious matters. His own faith—or rather, slavish superstition —was distinguished by the most rigid orthodoxy, and a large portion of his long reign was spent in the extinction of heresy. But this led to many instances of persecution, both public and private.

In the mean time, Justinian saw a new field opening for his energies in another direction, and immediately turned his attention to it. After the death of Theodoric the Great in 526 the affairs of Italy fell into a very confused condition, and the new conquerors were far from being firmly seated on their thrones. Rousing the national hostility of the Romans against the barbarians, the imperial army was united and determined ; and led by the able generals Belisarius and Narses, the conquests of Italy and Africa were achieved in a very short space of time. At the sight of the well-known eagles the soldiers of the barbarians refused to fight, and the nations threw off the supremacy of the Ostrogoths. The imperial generals now prosecuted an exterminating war. It is reckoned that during the reign of Justinian Africa lost five millions of inhabitants. Arianism was extinguished in that region ; and in Italy the numbers who perished by war, by famine, or in other ways, is supposed to have exceeded the whole of its present population. The sufferings of these countries during the revolutions of this period were greater than they had ever endured in either earlier or later times. So that both the secular events of Justinian's reign and his own legislative labours had an important, but most unfortunate, bearing on the history of Christianity.

After erecting the church of St. Sophia, and twenty-

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five other churches in Constantinople, and publishing a new edition of his code, he died A.D. 565.*

We now pass on to the third great founder of the papal edifice.

GREGORY THE FIRST SURNAMED THE GREAT. A.D. 590.

We have now come to the close of the sixth century of Christianity. At this period, the early history of the church ends, and the mediæval begins. The pontificate of Gregory may be regarded as the line that separates the two periods. A great change takes place. The Eastern churches decline and receive but little notice, while the churches of the West, especially of Rome, largely engage the attention of the historian. And as Gregory may be considered the *representative man* of this transitional period, we will endeavour to place him fairly before the reader.

Gregory was born at Rome about the year 540, his family being of senatorial rank, and himself the great-grandson of a pope named Felix; so that in his descent he blended both civil and ecclesiastical dignity. By the death of his father he became possessed of great wealth, which he at once devoted to religious uses. He founded and endowed seven monasteries; six in Sicily, and the other, which was dedicated to St. Andrew, in his family mansion at Rome. His costly robes, jewels, and furniture, he reduced to money, and lavished it on the poor. About the age of thirty-five he gave up his civil appointments, took up his abode in the Roman monastery, and entered on a strictly ascetic life. Although it was his

* Milman, vol. i. p. 350; J. C. Robertson, vol. i. p. 473; Milner, vol. ii. p. 336.

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own convent, he began with the lowest monastic duties. His whole time was spent in prayer, reading, writing, and the most self-denying exercises. The fame of his abstinence and charity spread far and wide. In course of time he became abbot of his monastery; and, on the death of the pope Pelagius, he was chosen by the senate, the clergy, and the people, to fill the vacant chair. He refused, and endeavoured by various means to escape the honours and difficulties of the papacy; but he was forcibly ordained, by the love of the people, as the supreme bishop.

Drawn from the quiet of a cloister and from his peaceful meditations there, Gregory now saw himself involved in the management of the most various and perplexing affairs of both Church and State. But he was evidently fitted for the great and arduous work which lay before him. We will notice first

THE FERVENT CHARITY OF GREGORY.

The character of Gregory was distinguished by the fervour of his almsgiving. Though raised to the papal throne, he lived in a simple and monastic style. His palace was surrounded by the suffering poor, as his monastery had been, and relief distributed with a liberal hand. Nor was he content to exercise his almsgiving alone; he powerfully exhorted his episcopal brethren to abound in the same. "Let not the bishop think," he said, "that reading and preaching alone suffice, or studiously to maintain himself in retirement, while the hand that enriches is closed. But let his hand be bountiful; let him make advances to those who are in necessity; let him consider the wants of others as his own; for without these qualities the name of bishop is a vain and empty title."

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The wealth of the Roman See enabled him to exercise extensive charities. As administrator of the papal funds, he has the reputation of being just, humane, and most laborious. But his biographers are so voluminous in their accounts of his good works that it is bewildering to attempt a brief sketch. However, as we can esteem him as a believer in Christ, notwithstanding the false position he was in, and his consequent blindness as to the true character of the church, we delight to dwell a little on his memory, and also to trace the *silver line* of God's grace in spite of the unhallowed mixture of secular and sacred things.

On the first Monday of every month he distributed large quantities of provisions to all classes. The sick and infirm were superintended by persons appointed to inspect every street. Before sitting down to his own meal, a portion was separated and sent to the hungry at his door. The names, ages, and dwellings of those receiving papal relief filled a large volume. So severe was the charity of Gregory, that one day, on hearing of the death of a poor man from starvation, he condemned himself to a hard penance for the guilt of neglect as steward of the divine bounty. But his active benevolence was not confined to the city of Rome; it was almost world-wide. He entered into all questions affecting the welfare of all classes, and prescribed minute regulations for all, lest the poor should be exposed to the oppression of the rich, or the weak to the strong. But this will more fully appear as we notice,

THE ECCLESIASTICAL AND TEMPORAL POSITION OF GREGORY.

The pastoral care of the church was evidently the main

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object and delight of Gregory's heart. This he believed to be his work, and fain would he have devoted himself entirely to it; for according to the superstitious credulity of the times, he had the deepest conviction that the care and government of the whole church belonged to him as the successor of St. Peter; and also, that he was bound to uphold the special dignity of the See of Rome. But he was compelled, from the disturbed state of Italy, and for the safety of his people—his dear flock—to undertake many troublesome kinds of business, altogether foreign to his spiritual calling. The Lombard* invaders were at that moment the terror of the Italians. The Goths had been to a great degree civilized and Romanized; but these new invaders were remorseless and pitiless barbarians; though strange to say, they were the avowed champions of Arianism. And the imperial power, instead of protecting its Italian subjects, acted only as a hindrance to their exerting themselves for their own defence. War, famine, and pestilence, had so wasted and depopulated the country, that all hearts failed, and all turned to the bishop as the only man for the emergency of the times: so firmly was the opinion of his integrity and ability established among men.

Thus we see that *temporal power*, in the first instance, was forced upon the Pope. It does not appear that he sought the position—a position so eagerly grasped by

* The Lombards were a German tribe from Brandenburg. According to the popular belief, they had been invited into Italy by Justinian to serve against the Goths. Their chief, Alboin, established a kingdom which lasted from 568 to 774. The last king, Desiderius, was dethroned by Charlemagne. As we shall meet them again in connection with our history, we give this notice of their origin.—Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates*.

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many of his successors; but rather that he entered with reluctance upon duties so little in accordance with the great object of his life. He unwillingly threw off the quiet contemplative life of the monk, and entered into the affairs of state as a duty to God and to his country. The direction of the political interests of Rome devolved for the most part upon Gregory. He was guardian of the city, and the protector of the population in Italy against the Lombards. All history bears witness to his great ability, his incessant activity, and the multiplicity of his occupations as the virtual sovereign of Rome.

But however unconscious Gregory may have been of what the effects would be of his great reputation, it nevertheless contributed much to the ecclesiastical and secular domination of Rome. The pre-eminence in his case, however sorrowful for a Christian, was disinterested and beneficially exerted; but not so with his successors. The infallibility of the Pope, spiritual tyranny, persecution for a difference of opinion, idolatry, the doctrine of the merit of works, purgatory and masses for the relief of the dead; which became the discriminating marks of the papacy, had not, as yet, a settled establishment at Rome; but, we may say, they were all in sight.

We must not, however, pursue this subject farther at present; we turn to one more interesting, and more congenial to our minds.

THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF GREGORY.

Notwithstanding the depression of the church, and of all classes of society, through the inroads of the barbarians, the blessed Lord was watching over the spread of the gospel in other countries. And surely it was of His great mercy, that the hosts of invaders which poured

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down on the provinces of the empire were soon converted to Christianity. They may have had very little understanding of their new religion, but it greatly softened their ferocity, and mitigated the sufferings of the vanquished. Gregory was most zealous in his endeavours to extend the knowledge of the gospel, and to bring over the barbarous nations to the Catholic faith. But his favourite scheme, and that which had been long on his heart, was the evangelization of the Anglo-Saxons.

The beautiful story of the incident which first directed Gregory's mind to the conversion of Britain, is too pleasing, not to find a place in our "Short Papers." In the early days of his monastic life, at least before his elevation to the papacy, his attention was arrested one day by seeing some beautiful fair-haired boys exposed for sale in the market-place. The following conversation is said to have taken place. He inquired from what country they came. "From the island of Britain," was the reply. "Are the inhabitants of that island Christians or Pagans?" "They are still Pagans." "Alas!" said he, "that the prince of darkness should possess forms of such loveliness! That such beauty of countenance should want that better beauty of the soul." He then asked by what name they were called. "Angles," was the reply. Playing on the words, he said, "Truly they are *Angels!* From what province?" "From that of Deira"—Northumberland—"Surely they must be rescued *de irâ*"—from the wrath of God, and called to the mercy of Christ—"What is the name of their king?" "Ella," was the answer. "Yea," said Gregory, "Alleluia must be sung in the dominions of that king."

"To be the first missionary to this beautiful people," says Milman, "and to win the remote and barbarous

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island, like a christian Cæsar, to the realm of Christ, became the holy ambition of Gregory. He extorted the unwilling consent of the Pope: he had actually set forth and travelled three days' journey, when he was overtaken by messengers sent to recall him. All Rome had risen in pious mutiny and compelled the Pope to revoke his permission."* But although he was thus prevented from executing this mission in person, he never lost sight of his noble object. From this time he was not allowed to return to his monastery. He was forced to embark in public affairs, first as a deacon, then as supreme pontiff. But all this was *compulsory* dignity to Gregory. His heart was set on the salvation of the fair-haired youths of England, and he would a thousand times rather have undertaken a journey to our island, with all its hardships and unknown dangers, than be crowned with the honours of the papacy. But such was the character of his mind, that he pursued with unwearied attention and devotion any scheme of piety which he had once planned. Hence it was that, after he was raised to the papal chair, he was enabled to furnish and send forth a band of forty missionaries to the shores of Britain. But before speaking of the character and results of this mission, it will be interesting to glance briefly at the history of the church in the British Isles from the beginning.

THE FIRST PLANTING OF THE CROSS IN BRITAIN.

Far back in the early days of apostolic simplicity, the cross of Christ, we believe, was planted in our island. There is fair historical evidence for believing that

* *Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 434.

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"Claudia," mentioned by Paul in his Second Epistle to Timothy, was the daughter of a British king, who married a distinguished Roman, named "Pudens." This circumstance will not seem unlikely if we bear in mind that, during the whole period of the Roman dominion in this country, there must have been many opportunities for the spread of Christianity; and that these would be readily embraced by those who loved the Lord Jesus and the souls of men. Besides, it was the custom at that time for the British kings and nobles to send their sons to Rome for education; and this practice, it is said, prevailed to such an extent, that a mansion was established expressly for them, and that a tax of one penny was levied on every house in England for its support.*

Another witness for the early planting of Christianity in this country is the testimony of the Fathers. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Tertullian, who wrote in the second century, affirm, that in every country known to the Romans there were professors of Christianity—from those who rode in chariots, or were houseless, there was no race of men amongst whom there were not prayers offered in the name of a crucified Jesus. We have also the testimony of later Fathers. The historic chain seems to be carried down by the mention of British bishops as having attended several of the general councils in the fourth century; and their orthodoxy throughout the Arian controversy has been attested by the weighty evidence of Athanasius and Hilary. The Pelagian heresy, it is said, was introduced into Britain by one Agricola in the year 429, and found much acceptance;

* For details, see *Life of Paul* by Conybeare and Howson, and *English Monasticism* by Travers Hill.

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but in a conference at St. Albans the heretical teachers were defeated by the orthodox clergy.*

About this time a complete change takes place in the history of the church in Britain, and prepares the way for the famous mission of Augustine under the direction of Gregory. It also forms a great epoch—a fresh starting-point, in the civil history of the country.

We have seen something of the decline and approaching fall of the Roman Empire. In consequence of the heavy calamities which befell the city and provinces of Rome, the troops were gradually withdrawn from this island for the protection of the seat of dominion. And the Romans, finding that they could no longer spare the forces necessary for a military establishment in Britain, took their final departure from our island towards the middle of the fifth century, and about four hundred and seventy-five years after Julius Cæsar first landed on its shores. The government then fell into the hands of a number of petty princes, who, of course, quarrelled. Civil wars, national weakness, and demoralization soon followed, with their usual judgments.

The withdrawal of the Roman troops necessarily exposed the country to the inroads of invaders, especially the Picts and Scots. The British chiefs, unable to resist these audacious robbers and spoilers, appealed in their distress to Rome. "The barbarians," they said, "break through our walls, like wolves into a sheep-fold, retire with their booty, and return every succeeding year." But, however much the Romans might pity their old friends, they were now unable to help them. Disappointed of aid from Rome, and despairing of their

* J. C. Robertson, vol. i. p. 450.

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ability to defend themselves against the desolating tribes of the North, the Britons turned to the Saxons for help.*

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAXONS IN ENGLAND.

About the middle of the fifth century the Saxon ships reached the British coast, and under their leaders Hengist and Horsa a few hundred fierce and desperate warriors disembarked. These famous leaders immediately took the field at the head of their followers, and completely defeated the Picts and Scots. But the remedy proved worse than the disease. One great evil was averted, but another and a greater followed. The Saxons, finding the country they had been hired to defend, a more genial climate than their own, and eager to exchange the bleak shores of the North for the rich fields of Britain, invited fresh bodies of their countrymen to join them; and thus, from being the defenders, they became the conquerors and masters of the ill-fated Britons. The Angles, and other tribes poured in on the country; and although the British did not yield without a severe struggle, the Saxon power prevailed, and reduced the natives to entire submission, or drove them to seek shelter in the mountains of Wales, Cornwall, and Cumberland. Many emigrated, and some settled in Armorica, now Brittany, in the north of France.

But the Saxons and Angles were not only wild warriors, they were savage merciless pagans. They exterminated Christianity wherever they conquered. According to the "venerable Bede," the bishops and their people were indiscriminately slaughtered with fire and

* *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. v. p. 301.

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sword, and there was no one to bury the victims of such cruelty. Public and private buildings were alike destroyed, priests were everywhere murdered at the altar; some who had fled to the mountains were seized, and slain by heaps; others, worn out with hunger, surrendered themselves, embracing perpetual slavery for the sake of life; some made for regions beyond the sea, and some led a life of poverty among mountains, forests, and lofty rocks.

Britain, after this event, relapsed into a state of obscure barbarism, was withdrawn from the view of the civilized world, and was sunk down to the depths of misery and cruelty; and yet these are the very people whom the Lord had laid on the heart of Gregory to win over to Himself by the gospel of peace. How could a few poor monks without fleet or army, we may well exclaim, venture on such a shore, far less hope to gain the hearts and subdue the lives of such savages to the faith and practice of the gospel of peace? It is the same gospel that triumphed over Judaism, Orientalism, and Heathenism, and by the same divine power, was soon to triumph over the fierce barbarism of the Anglo-Saxons. How weak and foolish is the infidelity that questions its divine origin, power and destiny! We will now watch the progress of the mission.

THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE TO ENGLAND.

In the year 596, and about 150 years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, Gregory's famous mission left Italy for our island. A company of forty missionary monks, under the direction of Augustine, were sent to preach the gospel to the benighted Anglo-Saxons. But hearing of the savage character and

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habits of the people, and being ignorant of their language, they became seriously discouraged and were afraid to proceed. Augustine was sent back by the others to entreat Gregory to discharge them from the service. But he was not the man to abandon a mission of that kind. He had not done it in haste: it was the result of much prayer and deliberation. He therefore exhorted and encouraged them to go forward, trusting in the living God, and in the hope of seeing the fruit of their labours in eternity. He gave them letters of introduction to bishops and princes, and secured for them all the assistance in his power. Thus animated, they pursued their journey, and travelling by way of France they arrived in Britain.

The forty-one missionaries having landed on the Isle of Thanet, announced to Ethelbert, king of Kent, their arrival from Rome, and their errand with glad tidings of great joy to himself and all his people. Circumstances greatly favoured this remarkable mission. Bertha the queen (daughter of Clotaire the First, king of the Franks) was a Christian. Her father stipulated in her marriage settlement, that she was to be allowed the free profession of Christianity, in which she had been educated. A bishop attended her court, several of her household were Christians, and divine service was conducted after the Romish form. The Lord in this instance made use of a woman, as He often did, for the propagation of the gospel among the heathen. These favourably contrast with the Jezebel class of women, and preserve *the silver line* of God's grace in these dark ages. Bertha was of the house of Clovis and Clotilda.

Ethelbert, influenced by his queen, received the missionaries kindly. Augustine and his retinue were allowed

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to proceed to Canterbury, the residence of the king. He consented to an interview, but in the open air, for fear of magic. The monks approached the royal party in the most imposing manner. One of their number, bearing a large silver cross with the figure of the Saviour, led the procession; the others followed chanting their Latin hymns. On reaching the oak appointed for the place of conference, permission was given to preach the gospel to the prince and his attendants. The king was then informed that they had come with good tidings, even eternal life to those that received them, and the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven for ever. The king was favourably impressed, and gave them a mansion in the royal city of Canterbury, and liberty to preach the gospel to his court and his people. They then marched to the city, singing in concert the litany; "We pray thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thine anger and thy fury may be removed from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia."

By these preparatory steps, the missionaries' way was now plain and easy. The approval of the monarch inspired his subjects with confidence, and opened their hearts to the teachers. Converts, such as they were, multiplied rapidly. On the Christmas day of the year 597, no fewer, it is said, than ten thousand heathen were gathered into the fold of the Catholic church by baptism. Ethelbert also submitted to baptism, and Christianity, in the Romish form, became the established religion of his kingdom. This was Rome's first footing in England. She now determined on subduing the British church to the papacy, and establishing her authority in Great Britain, as she had done in France. She set to work in this way.

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ROMISH HIERARCHY FORMED IN ENGLAND.

Gregory, on hearing of the great success of Augustine, sent him more missionaries, who carried with them a number of books, including the Gospels, with church plate, vestments, relics, and the pallium which was to invest Augustine as Archbishop of Canterbury. He also directed him to consecrate twelve bishops in his province; and, if he should see it advantageous to the propagation of the faith, to establish another metropolitan at York, who should then have authority to nominate twelve other bishops for the northern districts of the island. Such were the rudiments of the English church, and such the excessive eagerness of Gregory for ecclesiastical supremacy, that he settled a plan of government for places before they had been visited by the evangelist.

"In the ecclesiastical view of the case," says Greenwood, "the Anglo-Saxon church was the genuine daughter of Rome. But, beyond the limits of that establishment, no right of parentage can be assigned to her within the British Islands. A numerous christian population still existed in the northern and western districts, whose traditions gave no countenance to the Roman claim of maternity. The ritual and discipline of the British, Welsh, and Irish churches differed in many points from those of Rome and the Latins generally. They celebrated the Easter festival in conformity with the practice of the Oriental churches; and in the form of their tonsure, as well as in that of the baptismal rite, they followed the same model: differences which of themselves seem sufficient to preclude all probability of a purely Latin pedigree."*

* *Cathedra Petri*, book iii. p. 215.

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Augustine now at the head of a hierarchy composed of twelve bishops, immediately made the bold attempt to bring the ancient British church under the Roman jurisdiction. Through the influence of Ethelbert he obtained a conference with some of the British bishops at a place which from that time was called Augustine's oak, on the Severn. There the Roman and the British clergy met for the first time; and Augustine's first and imperious demand was, "Acknowledge the authority of the bishop of Rome." "We desire to love all men," they meekly replied, "and whatever we do for you, we will do for him also whom you call the Pope." Surprised and indignant at their refusal, Augustine exhorted them to adopt the Roman usages as to the celebration of Easter, the tonsure, and the administration of baptism, that a uniformity of discipline and worship might be established in the island. This they positively refused to do. Having received Christianity at first not from Rome but from the East, and never having acknowledged the Roman church as their mother, they looked upon themselves as independent of the See of Rome. A second and a third council were held, but with no better results. Augustine was plainly told, that the British church would acknowledge no man as supreme in the Lord's vineyard. The archbishop demanded, argued, censured, wrought miracles; but all to no purpose: the Britons were firm. At last he was plainly told that they could not submit either to the haughtiness of the Romans, or to the tyranny of the Saxons. Aroused to wrathful indignation at their quiet firmness, the angry priest exclaimed, "If you will not receive brethren who bring you peace, you shall receive enemies who bring you war. If you will not unite with us in shewing the Saxons

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the way of life, you shall receive from them the stroke of death." The haughty archbishop withdrew, and is supposed to have died soon after (A.D. 605); but his ill-omened prophecy was accomplished soon after his decease.

Edelfrid, one of the Anglo-Saxon kings, still a pagan, collected a numerous army, and advanced towards Bangor, the centre of British Christianity. The monks fled in great alarm. About twelve hundred and fifty of them met in a retired spot, where they agreed to continue together in prayer and fasting. Edelfrid drew nearer; and happening to see a number of unarmed men, inquired who they were; on being told that they were the monks of Bangor who had come to pray for the success of their countrymen. "Then," he cried, "although they have no weapons, they are fighting against us;" and he ordered his soldiers to fall upon the praying monks. About twelve hundred, it is said, were slain, and only fifty escaped by flight. Thus did the dominion of Rome commence in England, which continued for nearly a thousand years.

Whether Augustine had really anything to do with the murder of the monks, it seems hard, and is difficult, to say. Those who take a strong protestant view of the case plainly affirm, that his last days were occupied in making arrangements for the accomplishment of his own threatening. Others, who take an opposite view, deny that there is any evidence that he influenced the pagans to the dreadful tragedy. But, be that as it may, a dark suspicion must ever rest on the policy of Rome. Augustine's own revengeful words and her whole history confirm the suspicion. Such was the nature of the intolerant Jezebel; when argument failed, she appealed to the sword. Henceforth Romanism was characterized

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by arrogance and blood. The ancient church of Britain, which was limited to the mountainous districts of Wales, gradually diminished and died away.*

REFLECTIONS ON THE TIMES AND CHARACTER OF GREGORY.

The great prelate, like his great missionary, did not long survive the spiritual conquest of England. Worn out at length by his great labours and infirmities, he died in the year 604, assuring his friends that the expectation of death was his only consolation, and requesting them to pray for his deliverance from bodily sufferings.

The conduct of Gregory, during the thirteen years and six months that he was bishop of Rome, displays a zeal and a sincerity, which have scarcely been equalled in the history of the Roman church. He was laborious and self-denying in what he believed to be the service of God, and his duty to the church and to all mankind. The collection of his letters, nearly eight hundred and fifty in number, bears ample testimony to his ability and activity in all the affairs of men, and in every sphere of life. "From treating with patriarchs, kings, or emperors, on the highest concerns of Church and State, he passes to direct the management of a farm, or the relief of some distressed petitioner in some distant dependence of his See. He appears as a Pope, as a sovereign, as a bishop, as a landlord. He takes measures for the defence of his country, the conversion of the heathen, the repression and reconciliation of schismatics," &c., &c.†

* Gardner, vol. i. p. 391.

† J. C. Robertson, vol. ii. p. 4.

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But notwithstanding the varied excellencies of Gregory, he was deeply infected with the principles and spirit of the age in which he lived. The spirit of Jezebel was evidently at work, though yet in its youth. We look in vain for anything like christian simplicity in the church of God at this time. The piety of Gregory himself we cannot doubt; but, as an ecclesiastic, what was he? Poisoned to the heart's core by the gross delusion of the universal claims of the chair of St. Peter, he could brook no rival, as we see in his determined and bitter opposition to the pretensions of John, bishop of Constantinople; and, what was darker still, we see the same spirit, in his triumphing over the murder of the Emperor Maurice and his family by the cruel and treacherous Phocas, merely because he suspected Maurice of what he called heresy. It appears that Maurice countenanced what Gregory thought the *usurpation* of John in assuming the title of *universal bishop*. But even to sanction such a claim was no small crime in the mind of a Roman pontiff. And so it was with Gregory. When the intelligence of the bloody tragedy reached him, he rejoiced; it appeared to him in the light of a providential dispensation for the deliverance of the church from her enemies. The very well-springs of charity seem to have been dried up in the hearts of all who ever sat on a papal throne towards all ecclesiastical rivals. Justice, candour, humanity, and every right feeling of Christianity, must yield to the dominant claims of the false church. Even Gregory bowed before, and was fearfully corrupted by, "*that woman Jezebel.*"

THE SUPERSTITION AND IDOLATRY OF GREGORY.

Ambition, mingled with humility; and superstition,

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mingled with faith; characterized the great pontiff. This strange mixture and confusion was no doubt the result of his false position. It is difficult to understand how a man of such sound sense could be so debased by superstition as to believe in the working of miracles by means of relics, and to have recourse to such things for the confirmation of the truth of scripture. But the sad truth is, that he was blinded by the one great absorbing object, the interests of the church of Rome, in place of being devoted to the interests of Christ. Paul could say, "One thing I do;" another said, "One thing I know." First, we must *know* that we are pardoned and accepted; then, to *do* the things that please Christ is the high and heavenly calling of the Christian. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. . . . But this *one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii.) Such was, and ever ought to have been, the spirit and breathings of Christianity. But what do we find at the close of the sixth century? What was the *one thing* Gregory had in view? Clearly not the claims of a heavenly Christ, and conformity to Him in His resurrection, sufferings, and death. We may safely affirm, that the one great object of his public life was to establish beyond dispute *the universal bishopric of Rome*. And to this end, in place of leading souls to delight in the *ways* of Christ as well as in Himself, which Paul ever did, he sought to advance the claims of the Romish See, by *idolatry* and *corruption*. Neither was the spirit of *persecution* altogether absent.

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Monasticism, under the patronage of Gregory, especially according to the stricter rules of *Benedict*, was greatly revived and widely extended. The doctrine of purgatory, respect for relics, the worship of images, the idolatry of saints and martyrs, the merit of pilgrimages to holy places, were either taught or sanctioned by Gregory, as connected with his ecclesiastical system; all which we must own to be the unmistakable features of the activity of Balaam and the corruption of Jezebel.

But we are now in the *seventh century*. The dark ages are at hand, and dark indeed they are. The papacy begins to assume a definite form. And as we have reached in our history the close of one age of Christianity and the commencement of another, we may profitably pause for a moment and take a general survey of the progress of the gospel in different countries.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY OVER EUROPE.

THE ecclesiastical system which the Italian monks introduced into England rapidly spread, and ultimately triumphed. In about a hundred years after the arrival of Augustine it was professed and believed throughout Anglo-Saxon Britain. The English church, thus founded on the Roman model, could not fail to hold a position especially dependent on Rome. This union at an early period was promoted and strengthened by English monks, nuns, bishops, nobles, and princes, making frequent pilgrimages to the grave of St. Peter at Rome. In no country were the Roman missionaries more successful than among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, though they were considered the fiercest of the Teutonic race. The British clergy, though still adhering to their old ways, and disposed to resist foreign assumption, were compelled to seclude themselves in the extremities of the land. Romanism now prevailed all over England.

SCOTLAND AND IRELAND appear to have been blessed with Christianity about the same time as Britain. By means of soldiers, sailors, missionaries, and persecuted Christians from the south, the gospel was preached and many believed. But, as the early religious history of these countries is so overlaid with legends, we will only refer to names and events that are well authenticated.

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THE FIRST PREACHERS OF CHRISTIANITY IN IRELAND.

PATRICK, the apostle of Ireland, is supposed to have been born about the year 372 on the banks of the Clyde. *Kilpatrick* is said to have taken its name from him. His parents were earnest Christians; his father was a deacon, and his grandfather was a presbyter. His mother, who sought to instil into his heart the doctrines of Christianity, was sister to the celebrated Martin, archbishop of Tours. But the young Succath—for such was his original name—was not seriously inclined. Some time after, his parents left Scotland, and settled in Brittany. At the age of sixteen, when Succath and his two sisters were playing on the sea-shore, some Irish pirates, commanded by O'Neal, carried them all three off to their boats and sold them as captives in Ireland. For six years he was employed in keeping cattle.

During the period of his slavery he endured many and great hardships. But his sin had found him out. He became serious and thoughtful. When about the age of fifteen he had committed some great sin which now pressed heavily on his conscience both night and day. He prayed often, and wept much; indeed such was the inward fervour of his soul, that he became insensible to the cold, the rain, and other inconveniences to which he was exposed. He now thought of home, of his mother's tender words and earnest prayers; and God graciously used the remembrance of the gospel to the blessing of his soul. He was born again. "I was sixteen years old," he says, "and knew not the true God; but in that strange land the Lord opened my unbelieving eyes, and, although late, I called my sins to mind, and was converted with my whole heart to the Lord my God,

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who regarded my low estate, had pity on my youth and ignorance, and consoled me as a father consoles his children. The love of God increased more and more in me, with faith and the fear of His name. The Spirit urged me to such a degree that I poured forth as many as a hundred prayers in one day. And during the night, in the forests and on the mountains when I kept my flock, the rain and snow and frost and sufferings which I endured excited me to seek after God. At that time I felt not the indifference which now I feel; the Spirit fermented my heart."*

If these words can be relied upon as flowing from the lips of Succath, they present a much purer testimony to the truth of the gospel than we ever find in the church of Rome. They present an exercised soul in close quarters with God Himself. The forms and priesthood of Romanism destroy this beautiful, personal, direct communion with God and with His Christ through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost. But such, no doubt, was the Christianity of these British Isles before it was corrupted by the papal emissaries.

In the course of time Succath gained his liberty, and after travelling much and preaching he returned to his family. But he soon felt an irresistible desire to return to Ireland and preach the gospel to the pagans, among whom he had found the Saviour. In vain did his parents and friends seek to detain him. He broke through all hindrances, and with a heart full of christian zeal departed for Ireland. He was now over forty years of age, and, according to some writers, had been ordained a presbyter, and was now consecrated bishop of the

* D'Aubigné, vol. v. p. 25.

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Irish. After this he is known as Saint Patrick. He devoted the remainder of his life to the Irish, and laboured among them with great effect, though amidst many difficulties and dangers. The conversion of Ireland is ascribed to his means. The year of his death is uncertain.

THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF IRELAND.

The blessed fruits of St. Patrick's labours were abundantly manifested in after years. Ireland at this time is described as a kind of elysium of peace and piety; and its fame for pure scriptural teaching rose so high, that it received the honourable appellation of "the Isle of Saints." The labours of the Irish clergy, however, were not confined to their own country. Naturally fond of travelling or wandering, and being now energized by a love for souls, numbers left their native country, as missionary bands, under the leadership of a loved and devoted abbot. The monasteries, it is generally said, were so filled with pious monks at this time, that there was not sufficient room in their own country for the employment of their zeal, so that they felt it was their duty to exercise their activity in other lands. Thus we see a broad *silver line* of God's grace in those rude people, more distinctly marked than in any other part of Christendom. The Lord's name be praised. But let us take an example to see its working.

THE MISSION OF COLUMBA.

COLUMBA, a pious man, of royal descent, and full of good works, became deeply impressed with the importance of carrying the gospel to other lands. He thought of Scotland, and determined to visit the country of the

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famous Succath. Having communicated his intention to some of his fellow Christians, who thoroughly entered into his scheme, the mission was agreed upon. About the year 565, Columba, accompanied by twelve companions, sailed from the shores of Ireland in an open boat of wicker-work covered with skins; and, after experiencing much tossing in their rude little vessel, the noble missionary band reached the Western Isles—a cluster of islands off the west coast of Scotland called the Hebrides. They landed near the barren rock of Mull, to the south of the basaltic caverns of Staffa, and fixed their abode on a small island afterwards known as Iona, or Icolmkill. There he founded his monastery, afterwards so famous in the history of the church. Tradition has preserved a point on the coast at which they landed by an artificial mound faintly resembling an inverted boat, fashioned after the pattern of the currach, in which the pious monks navigated the sea.*

A goodly number of Christians, it is thought, had already found a refuge on that barren rock. At that time it must have been almost completely isolated from the abodes of men. The waters of the Hebrides are so tempestuous that navigation in open boats must have been extremely dangerous. The name Iona signifies "The island of waves." Besides its cross tides, its currents, and its headlands, the heavy swell of the Atlantic rolls in upon its shores. Of the *Monks* of Iona we shall speak by-and-by; but we have not yet done with Ireland.

* For interesting details, see "*The Church History of Scotland from the commencement of the Christian era to the present time*," by the Rev. John Cunningham, minister of Crieff. A. and C. Black, Edinburgh, 1859.

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COLUMBANUS, another monk of great sanctity, appears to have left his cell about thirty years after Columba. He was born in Leinster, and trained in the great monastery of Bangor on the coast of Ulster. A society of three thousand monks, under the government of its founder, Comgal, were fostered in this convent. And the church in Ireland was still free; it had not yet been enslaved by the church of Rome. They were simple and earnest in their Christianity, compared with the lifeless forms and the priestly element of the papacy. Neither did the religious houses of that period resemble the popish convents of later times. Still they had travelled far away from the simplicity of apostolic Christianity.

The word of God was not their only guide. Christianity had not existed in the world six hundred years without contracting many corruptions. It had passed through many events of very great importance in the history of the church. Gnosticism, Monasticism, Arianism, and Pelagianism, were giant evils in those early days; but Monasticism was the popular institution at the close of the sixth century.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MONK SUPERIOR.

A proficient in the mystic piety of that day was believed to work miracles, utter prophecies, and enjoy divine visions. He was surrounded with such a fearful sanctity, that none dared to touch the man of God. He emerged from his miserable cell as from another world, himself and his garments covered with dust and ashes; he boldly rebuked the vices of kings, confronted the most cruel of tyrants, threatened the overthrow of dynasties, and assumed the lofty tone of superiority over all secular dignities.

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Such was Columbanus. With a colony of monks he sailed from Ireland about the year 590. He had intended to preach the gospel beyond the Frankish dominions ; but he landed in Gaul. The fame of his piety reached the ears of Guntram, king of Burgundy, who invited him to settle in that country. Declining the king's offer, the abbot requested permission to retire into some unapproachable wilderness. He established himself in the Vosges. For a time the missionaries had to endure great hardships. They had often for days no other food than wild herbs, the bark of trees, and probably fish from the stream. But by degrees they made a favourable impression on the people of the neighbourhood. All classes looked on them with reverence. Provisions were sent to them, especially by those who were desirous of profiting by the prayers of these holy men. The supply was described as miraculous. The piety and wonder-working powers of the abbot soon gathered numbers around him. Monasteries arose in different places and votaries flocked in to fill them.

Columbanus presided as abbot over all these institutions. His rule was probably that of the Irish Bangor. Although his delight was ever to wander in the wild woods, or to dwell for days in his lonely cave, he still exercised strict superintendence over all the monasteries which he had formed. Work, diet, reading, time for prayer, the adjustment of punishment, were all ruled by himself. He at length fell into disputes with his neighbours as to the time of keeping Easter. He wrote on the subject to Pope Gregory and to Boniface; and placed the church of Jerusalem above that of Rome, as being the place of the Lord's resurrection. He laboured also in Metz, Switzerland, and

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Italy; after founding many monasteries, he died in Rome A.D. 610.

The most celebrated follower of the great abbot was his countryman, St. Gall, who had accompanied him in all his fortunes; but, being ill when his master passed into Italy, he could not follow him, and was left in Helvetia. He afterwards preached to the people in their own language, founded the famous monastery which bears his name, and is honoured as the apostle of Switzerland. He died about the year 627. From the time of St. Patrick until the middle of the twelfth century the church in Ireland continued to assert its independence of Rome, and to maintain its position as an active living branch of the church, not owning any earthly head.* We will now turn to Scotland.

THE FIRST PREACHERS OF CHRISTIANITY IN SCOTLAND.

About a hundred and fifty years before the famous Columba landed on the Isle of Iona, St. Ninian, "a most holy man of the British nation," as Bede calls him, preached the gospel in the southern districts of Scotland. This missionary, like almost all the saints of early times, is declared to have been of royal blood. He received his education at Rome, studied under the famous Martin of Tours, and, returning to Scotland, fixed his principal residence in Galloway.

If his biographers can be trusted, we are to believe that he went everywhere preaching the word, and that the naked savages listened, wondered, and were converted. "He hastened about the work to which he had been sent by the Spirit, under the command of Christ;

* Gardner's *Faiths of the World*, vol. i. p. 150.

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and being received in his country, there was a great concourse and running together of the people, much joy in all, wonderful devotion; the praise of Christ everywhere resounded; some took him for a prophet. Presently the strenuous husbandman entered the field of his Lord, began to root up those things which were badly planted, to disperse those badly collected, and destroy those badly built." Thousands, it is said, were baptized and joined the army of the faithful.

He began to build a church of stone on the shores of the Solway, but, before it was finished, he received intelligence of the death of his friend and patron, St. Martin, and piously dedicated the church to his honour. This is said to have been the first stone building erected in Scotland, and, from its white and glittering appearance compared with the log and mud cabins hitherto used, it attracted great attention. It was called in Saxon, *whithern*, or *whithorn*, from its appearance, and so it is till the present day.*

We know nothing of the immediate successors of St. Ninian: down to the mission of Columba the history of Christianity in Scotland is little known. Doubtless the Lord would keep alive the fire which He had kindled, and preserve and spread the truth of the gospel which had been received by so many. Among the Picts, south of the Grampians, Ninian appears to have laboured chiefly and successfully; but with the celebrated Columba begins the most interesting period in the ancient ecclesiastical annals of Scotland.

We have already seen Columba and his colony of monks settling down in Iona. There he built his mon-

* Cunningham, vol. i. p. 52.

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astery, such as it was. And so famous did the college of Iona become, that it was considered for many years, nay, for centuries, the light of the Western world. Men, eminent for learning and piety, were sent forth to found bishoprics and universities in every quarter of Europe. For thirty-four years Columba lived and laboured on that solitary rock. Occasionally he visited the mainland, doing the work of an evangelist among the barbarous Scots and Picts, planting churches, and exercising an immense influence over all classes; but his great object was training men for the work of the gospel at home and abroad. A close and friendly connection would no doubt be maintained between the North of Ireland, and the West of Scotland; indeed, at that time they were considered as identical and were known by the general appellation of Scots.

THE IONA MISSIONARIES.

About the close of the sixth, or the beginning of the seventh century, missionaries began to issue from the cloisters of Iona, carrying the light of Christianity not merely to the different parts of Scotland but to England and the continent. Augustine and his Italian monks landed in Kent a little before the famous Aiden from Iona and his monks entered Northumberland. Thus was Saxon England invaded by christian missionaries at its two extremities.

Oswald, then king of Northumbria, was a Christian. He had been converted, baptized, and received into the communion of the Scottish church when a youth and an exile in that country. On recovering the throne of his ancestors he naturally desired that his people should be brought to the knowledge of the Saviour. At his

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request the elders of Iona sent him a missionary band, headed by the pious and faithful Aiden. The king assigned them the island of Lindisfarne for their residence. Here Aiden established the system of Iona; and the community lived according to monastic rule. Numbers gathered to the new monastery both from Scotland and Ireland. The king himself zealously assisted in spreading the gospel; sometimes in preaching, and sometimes acting as an interpreter, having learnt the Celtic during his exile. Bede, though strongly Roman in his affections, bears hearty testimony to the virtues of these Northern clergy—"Their zeal, their gentleness, their humility and simplicity, their earnest study of scripture, their freedom from all selfishness and avarice, their honest boldness in dealing with the great, their tenderness and charity towards the poor, their strict and self-denying life."*

The work of conversion appears to have prospered in the hands of both Augustine and Aiden. The Italian monks extended their teaching and influence over the south and south-west of the kingdom, while the Scottish monks spread the truth of a clearer and simpler gospel over the northern, eastern, and midland provinces. At one time the sees of York, Durham, Lichfield and London, were filled by Scotchmen. Thus Rome and Iona met on English ground, a collision was inevitable; who would be master? Augustine, who had been consecrated primate of England by the pope, required the Celtic monks to conform to the Roman discipline: this they stedfastly refused to do, and defended with great firmness their own discipline and the rules of Iona. Serious

* J. C. Robertson, vol. ii. p. 62.

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disputes now arose. Rome could submit to no rival; she was determined to hold England in her grasp.

After the death of the pious and generous Oswald, the throne was filled by his brother Oswy, who also had been converted to Christianity and baptized in Scotland during his captivity. But his princess adhered to the customs of Rome, and the family followed the mother. A strong influence was thus brought to bear against the Scottish monks; and wearied with the continual taunts and the unscrupulous conduct of the pontiff's agents, both sacred and secular, the unyielding presbyters determined to leave England and return to Iona. By far the largest and most important part of the country had been converted to Christianity by means of their labours; but the triumph of Rome at the Whitby conference in 664, through the subtlety of the priest Wilfred, so discouraged them that they quietly withdrew from the field after occupation of about thirty years. "However holy your Columba may have been," said the crafty Wilfred, "wilt thou prefer him to the prince of the apostles, to whom Christ said, *Thou art Peter, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*" King Oswy was present, and professed obedience to St. Peter, Lest, he said, when I appear at the gate of heaven, there should be no one to open it to me. The people soon followed their prince, and in a short time all England became subservient to Rome. It was by ascribing to Peter what only belongs to the blessed Lord, that the papacy so prevailed in those dark and superstitious times. "I am he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." (Rev. iii. 7.) But neither arguments, intimidation, nor derision, had any effect on the presbyters of the North. They refused to

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acknowledge that they owed any allegiance to the bishop of Rome. Scotland was still free. How to enslave her was now the great question with the Romanists. The priests, as usual, set to work with the princes. It was accomplished in this way:—

THE CLERICAL TONSURE.

Amongst the many subjects of dispute between the Celtic and Italian missionaries, the true day for the celebration of Easter, and the true form of the clerical tonsure, excited the fiercest controversies, stirred up the strongest passions, and ultimately led to the fall of the church in Scotland, and the triumph of the priests of Rome. But, having already spoken of the Eastern question in connection with the council of Nice, we will only now notice the dispute about the tonsure.

It must appear strange to our youthful protestant readers, who may never have seen a catholic priest with his hat off, that the shaving of his crown was of more weight in his ordination than either his learning or his piety. And the mere form in which it was shaven was considered of such importance that it was made a test of orthodoxy. The Scottish monks followed the churches of the East both in the observance of Easter and in the form of the tonsure. They shaved the fore part of the head from ear to ear in the form of a crescent. The Easterns claimed John and Polycarp as their example and authority. The Italians professed to be greatly shocked by such barbarity, and called it the tonsure of Simon Magus. The Roman clergy used the circular form. This was done by making bald a small round spot on the very crown of the head, and enlarging the spot as the ecclesiastic advanced in holy orders. The tonsure was

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made requisite as a preparation for orders about the fifth or sixth century.

Augustine and his successors in the see of Canterbury, following the writings of the most ancient and venerable Fathers, affirmed that the tonsure was first introduced by the prince of the apostles, in honour of the crown of thorns which was pressed upon the head of the Redeemer; and that the instrument devised by the impiety of the Jews for the ignominy and torture of Christ may be worn by His apostles as their ornament and glory. For more than a century the controversy raged with great fierceness. So far did matters proceed, that a man was or was not a heretic according as he made bare the crown or the forepart of his head. Rome was filled with anger; human means appeared insufficient to conquer a miserable band of presbyters in a remote corner of the island. They refused to bend before her. What was to be done? As always, finding herself unable to accomplish her object by the priest, she had recourse to court favourites, nobles, and princes. Naitam, king of the Picts, was made to believe, that by submitting to the pope he would be equal to Clovis and Clotaire. Flattered by such greatness of future glory, he recommended all the clergy of his kingdom to receive the tonsure of St. Peter. Then without delay he sent agents and letters into every province, and caused all the monasteries and monks to receive the circular tonsure according to the Roman fashion. Some refused. The elders of the rock held out for a time; but the orders of the king, the example of the clergy, and the weakness of some amongst themselves led the way to the downfall of Iona and all Scotland. About the beginning of the eighth century the razor was introduced, they re-

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ceived the Latin tonsure, they became serfs of Rome, and continued so until the period of the Reformation.*

WHO WERE THE CULDEES?

The Culdees, as their name imports, were a kind of religious recluses, who lived in retired places. The christian community of Iona were called *Culdees*. And this is probably the reason why that isolated spot was fixed upon by Columba as the seat of his monastery. Though utterly free from the corruptions of the great monasteries on the continent, the life and institutions of Columba were strictly monastic. And from fragments gathered up it appears pretty certain, that "they gloried in their miracles, paid respect to relics, performed penances, fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, had something very like to auricular confession, absolution, and masses for the dead; but it is certain they never submitted to the decrees of the papacy in regard to celibacy." Many of the Culdees were married men. St. Patrick was the son of a deacon and the grandson of a priest.†

But though these good and holy men were so far infected by the superstition of the times; the remoteness of their situation, the simplicity of their manners, and the poverty of their country must have greatly preserved them from Roman influences, and from the prevalent vices of more opulent monasteries. We would rather think of it as a seminary, in which men were trained for the work of the ministry. In after years the monks were frequently disturbed, and sometimes slaughtered by pirates. In the twelfth century Iona

* D'Aubigné, vol. v. p. 77. Cunningham, vol. i. p. 90.

† Cunningham, vol. i. p. 94.

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passed into the possession of Roman monks. "Its pure and primitive faith," says Cunningham, "had departed; its renown for piety and learning was gone; but the memory of these survived, and it was now regarded with greater superstitious reverence than ever. Long before this it had been made the burial-place of royalty, numerous pilgrimages were made to it, and now kings and chiefs began to enrich it with donations of tithes and lands. The walls which are now crumbling were then reared; and the voyager beholds these venerable ecclesiastical remains rising from a bare moor and in the midst of a wide ocean, with feelings akin to those with which he regards the temples of Thebes standing half buried amid the sands of the desert."

We will now take our leave for a while of the British Isles. The first planting of the cross in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ultimate triumph of Rome in these countries are events of the deepest interest in themselves; but as happening in our own country they are entitled to our special attention. From this time little outward change takes place in the history of the church, though there may have been many internal struggles from the numerous abuses and the audacious demands of Rome.

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN GERMANY AND PARTS ADJACENT.

It is more than probable that the cross had been planted, at an early period, in the heart of the German forests, as well as in those cities and districts which were in subjection to the Roman Empire. The names of several bishops from Germany are found in the lists of the councils of Rome and Arles held under the

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authority of Constantine in the years 313, 314. But it was not till the close of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, that it was widely spread and firmly rooted. The Britons, Scots, and Irish were honoured of God as the principal instruments in this great and blessed work. The ardent Columbanus, whose mission we have already noticed, was the leader of the earliest band who went to the help of the heathen on the continent of Europe. He first crossed over into France, then passed the Rhine, and laboured for the conversion of the Swabians, Bavarians, Franks, and other nations of Germany. *St. Kilian*, a Scotchman, and a most devoted evangelist, followed him. He is regarded as the apostle of Franconia, and honoured as a martyr for his christian faithfulness, about the year 692. *Willibrord*, an English missionary with eleven of his countrymen, crossed over to Holland to labour among the Frieslanders; but, like other Anglo-Saxons of the period, he was warmly devoted to the Roman See. He was ordained bishop of Witteburg by the pope: his associates spread the gospel through Westphalia and the neighbouring countries.

But the man who brought the nations of Germany, like a flock of sheep under the shepherd of Rome, was the famous *Winfrid*. He was born at Crediton in Devonshire, of a noble and wealthy family, about the year 680. He entered a monastery in Exeter at the age of seven, and was afterwards removed to Nursling in Hampshire. Here he became famous for his ability as a preacher, and as an expositor of scripture. He felt called of God in early life to go abroad as a missionary to the heathen. He sailed to Frisia in the year 716. His labours were long and abundant. Three times he visited Rome and received great honours from the pope.

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Under the title of St. Boniface, and as the apostle of Germany, he died as a martyr at the age of sixty-five. But though he was a most successful missionary, a man of great strength of character, of great learning, and of saintly life, he was the sworn vassal of the pope, and sought rather the advancement of the church of Rome than the extension of the gospel of Christ.*

THE GREAT PAPAL SCHEME OF AGGRANDIZEMENT.

The diffusion of Christianity in this century far exceeded its former bounds both in the Eastern and Western countries. We have seen something of its triumphs in the West. In the East, the Nestorians are said to have laboured with incredible industry and perseverance to propagate the truth of the gospel in Persia, Syria, India, and among the barbarous and savage nations inhabiting the deserts and the remotest shores of Asia. In particular, the vast empire of China was illumined by their zeal and industry with the light of Christianity. During several succeeding centuries, the patriarch of the Nestorians sent out a bishop to preside over the churches then in China. These interesting people reject image worship, auricular confession, the doctrine of purgatory, and many other corrupt doctrines of the Roman and Greek churches.

The Eastern or Greek church appears to have been hindered by internal dissensions from caring much for the spread of Christianity among the heathen. In the West all was activity, but alas! not for the spread of the gospel, or the conversion of souls.†

* For particulars see Hardwicke's *Middle Ages*; J. C. Robertson, vol. ii. p. 95.

† Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 29.

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THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF THE PAPACY.

We now return to Rome. Her importance and influence as a centre, claim our closest attention for a little. The spiritual dominions of the pope were now extended far and wide. From all parts of the empire bishops, princes, and people looked to Rome as the parent of their faith, and the highest authority in Christendom. But, though thus exalted to the highest spiritual sovereignty, the supreme pontiff, in his relation to the eastern empire, was still a subject. This was unbearable to the pride and ambition of Rome. The mighty struggle for political life and power now commenced. It lasted during the whole course of the seventh and eighth centuries. This was the period of transition from a state of subordination to the civil power to that of political self-existence. How this could be accomplished was now the great problem which the Vatican had to solve. But the spiritual dominion could not be maintained without secular power.

The Lombards—the nearest and most dreaded neighbours of the popes—and the Greek empire were the two great obstacles in the way of the pope's temporal sovereignty. The downfall of the western empire, and the absence of any truly national government, left the Roman people to look to the bishop as their natural chief. He was thus invested with a special political influence, distinct from his ecclesiastical character. The invasions of the Lombards, as we have already seen, and the feebleness of the Greeks, contributed to the increase of political power in the hands of the pontiffs. But this was only accidental, or the necessity of unforeseen emergencies. The Roman states were still governed by

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an officer of the eastern empire, and the pope himself, if he offended the Emperor, was liable to be seized and thrown into prison, as was actually the case with Pope St. Martin in the year 653, who died in exile the following year.

THE ONE GRAND OBJECT OF THE PAPACY.

Every day it became more and more manifest, that there could be no solid peace for Rome, no sure foundation for the spiritual supremacy already achieved, but in the total overthrow both of the Greek and Lombard powers in Italy, and the appropriation of their spoils by the holy See. This was now the one grand object of the successors of St. Peter, and the battle they had to fight. But like the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite it must be possessed by fair means or foul. Jezebel plots, and the death of Naboth is accomplished. The history of the Lombard kings, and of the great Iconoclastic controversy, during the seventh and eighth centuries, throws much light on the means used to gain this end; but of these we can only say a word as we pass along, and must refer our readers to the general histories.*

"There is abundant historical ground to believe," says Greenwood, "that this object had by this time shaped itself very distinctly in the mind of the papacy: the territory of its religious enemy, the Emperor, must be definitively annexed to the patrimony of St. Peter, together with as much more extensive a territorial estate as opportunity might bring within its grasp. But there remained the arduous and apparently hopeless task of wresting these prospective acquisitions from the hands

* See especially Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri.*

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of the Lombard enemy. And, in fact, the whole course of the papal policy was thenceforward directed to the accomplishment of this single object."

PEPIN AND CHARLEMAGNE.
A.D. 741–814.

The eyes of the popes had for some time been turned to France as the quarter from which deliverance was to come. The Frankish nation had been catholic from the beginning of their Christianity; but a closer connection with Rome had been lately formed by means of St. Boniface, the English monk. Filled as he was with the reverence of his nation for St. Peter and his successors, he exerted all his influence among the bishops of France and Germany, to extend the authority of the Roman See. This prepared the way for the solution of the great problem now in hand.

PEPIN, the high steward, or mayor of the palace, to Childeric III. king of the Franks, who had long exercised all the powers of the State together with all the attributes of sovereignty excepting the title, thought that the time was come to put an end to the pageant royalty of his master, and assume the kingly name and honours. He possessed in full measure all the qualities which the nobility and people were accustomed to respect at that period in princes. He was a gallant warrior and an experienced statesman. By a brilliant series of successes he had greatly extended the dominion of the Franks. The poor king being destitute of such abilities sank in popular favour, and was surnamed the Stupid. Pepin, however, had the wisdom to proceed cautiously at this stage of his plans. Boniface, who played an

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important part in this matter, was secretly dispatched to Rome to prepare the pope for Pepin's message, and with instructions how to answer it. In the meantime assembled the states of the realm to deliberate on the subject. The nobles gave it as their opinion, that first of all the pontiff should be consulted, whether it would be lawful to do what the mayor desired. Accordingly two confidential ecclesiastics were sent to Rome to propose the following question to Pope Zachary—"*Whether the divine law did not permit a valiant and warlike people to dethrone an imbecile and indolent monarch, who was incapable of discharging any of the functions of royalty, and to substitute in his place one more worthy of rule, and one who had already rendered most important service to the state?*" The laconic answer of the pope—already in possession of all the secrets—was prompt and favourable. "*He who lawfully possesses the royal power may also lawfully assume the royal title.*"

The pope no doubt replied as his questioners desired. Pepin now felt secure of his prize. Fortified by the approval of the highest ecclesiastical authority, and assured of the acquiescence of the people, he boldly assumed the royal title. He was crowned by Boniface, in the presence of the assembled nobles and prelates of the realm, at Soissons, A.D. 752. But the religious character of the coronation marked the growing power of the clergy. The Jewish ceremony of anointing was introduced by Boniface to sanctify the usurpers; and the bishops stood around the throne as of equal rank with the armed nobles. According to the usage of the Franks Pepin was elevated on the shield, amid the acclamations of the people, and proclaimed king of the Franks. Childeric, the last of the Merovingian kings,

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was stripped of royalty without opposition, shorn of his long hair, tonsured, and shut up in a monastery.

ZACHARY'S SANCTION OF PEPIN'S PLOT.

The part which Boniface and his patron the pope had in this revolution, and the morality of the proceedings, have been the subjects of much controversy. Papal writers have been at some pains to exonerate the unscrupulous priests, and protestant writers to criminate them. But if we compare their conduct with the principles of the New Testament, there can be no controversy. Every right principle and feeling, both human and divine, were readily sacrificed to secure the alliance of Pepin against the Greeks and Lombards. The violation of the sacred rights of kings, the great law of hereditary succession, the rebellious ambition of a servant, the degradation of a lawful sovereign, absolving subjects from their allegiance, are here sanctioned by the papacy as right in the sight of God, provided they are the means of raising the pope to temporal sovereignty. Such was the daring wickedness and awful blasphemy of the Roman See in the middle of the eighth century. Let the student of church history note this occurrence as characteristic of the papacy, and as a precedent for its future pretensions. It is generally related as the first instance of the pope's interference with the rights of princes and the allegiance of subjects. But the successors of Zachary made ample use of the precedent in after years. They asserted that the kings of France, from this time, held their crown only by the authority of the pope, and that the papal sanction was their only legal title. Little did either Pepin or Zachary foresee the immense effects of this one negotiation on the history

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of the church and the world. It was the first great step towards the future kingdom of the bishop of Rome—the important link in the chain of events.

THE TEMPORAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PAPACY ESTABLISHED.

By a mutual exchange of good offices, in less than three years Pepin crossed the Alps at the head of a numerous army, overthrew the Lombards, and recovered the Italian territory which they had wrested from the Eastern empire. Justice would indeed have demanded that it should be returned to the Emperor to whom it belonged; or he might have retained it for himself. But he did neither: mindful of his obligation to the holy see, he replied, that he had not gone to battle for the sake of any man, but for the sake of St. Peter alone, and to obtain the forgiveness of his sins. He then transferred the sovereignty over the provinces in question to the bishop of Rome. This was the foundation of the whole temporal dominion of the popes.

Astolph, king of the Lombards, having sworn to Pepin that he would restore to St. Peter the towns which he had seized, the French troops were withdrawn. But the magnificent "*donation*," so far as the pope was concerned, was only on paper. He had not been put into actual possession of the ceded territories, neither had he the means of putting himself in possession of the royal gift. No sooner, therefore, had the Frankish king recrossed the Alps than Astolph refused to fulfil his engagements. He collected his scattered divisions, and resumed his attacks upon the territories of the church. He wasted the country up to the very walls of Rome, and laid siege to the city. The pope, incensed as much at the evasive

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conduct of Pepin as at the perfidy of the Lombards, sent messengers to his Frankish protectors in all haste by sea, for every way by land was closed by the enemy. His first letter reminded king Pepin, that he hazarded eternal condemnation if he did not complete the *donation* which he had vowed to St. Peter. A second letter followed, more pathetic, more persuasive. Still the Franks were tardy. And finally the pope wrote a third, as from St. Peter himself. The daring and assumption of this letter is so awful, that we give it entire as a specimen of the means used by the pope to terrify the barbarians into the protection of the holy see and the advancement of her dominions. He considered all means justified for such high purposes, Thus it reads:

"I, Peter the apostle, protest, admonish, and conjure you, the most christian kings, Pepin, Charles, and Carloman, with all the hierarchy, bishops, abbots, priests, and all monks; all judges, dukes, counts, and the whole people of the Franks. The mother of God likewise adjures you, and admonishes and commands you, she as well as the thrones and dominions, and all the host of heaven, to save the beloved city of Rome from the detested Lombards. If ye hearken, I, Peter the apostle, promise you my protection in this life and in the next, will prepare for you the most glorious mansions in heaven, and will bestow on you the everlasting joys of paradise. Make common cause with my people of Rome, and I will grant whatever ye may pray for. I conjure you not to yield up this city to be lacerated and tormented by the Lombards, lest your own souls be lacerated and tormented in hell, with the devil and his pestilential angels. Of all nations under heaven the Franks are highest in the esteem of St. Peter; to me you owe all

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your victories. Obey, and obey speedily; and, by my suffrage, our Lord Jesus Christ will give you in this life length of days, security, victory; in the life to come, will multiply His blessings upon you, among His saints and angels."*

THE FORESHADOWING OF THE MAN OF SIN.

Nothing could give us a more expressive idea of the fearful apostasy of the church of Rome than this letter. The one title to eternal life is obedience to the pope; the highest duty of man is the protection and enlargement of the holy See. But where is Christ? where are His claims? where is Christianity? In place of seeking to convert the barbarians and win their souls for Christ, the Lord's most holy name, and the name of the apostle are prostituted to the basest of purposes. The soldier that fights hardest for the Roman See, though destitute of every moral and religious qualification, is assured of great temporal advantages in this present life, and in the life to come the highest seat in heaven. Surely we have here the mystery of iniquity, and the foreshadowing of that man of sin, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God—even of him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. 2 Thessalonians ii. 3–12.

Pepin soon had his Franks in marching order. The threatenings and promises of St. Peter's letter had the desired effect. They again invaded Italy. Astolph

* For an able description of this important period, see Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 243.

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yielded at once to the demands of Pepin. The contested territory was abandoned. Ambassadors from the East were present at the conclusion of the treaty, and demanded the restitution of Ravenna and its territory to their master, the Emperor; but Pepin declared that his sole object in the war was to shew his veneration for St. Peter; and he bestowed by the right of conquest the whole upon his successors. The representatives of the pope now passed through the land, receiving the homage of the authorities and the keys of the cities. But the territory he accepted from a foreign potentate in the form of a *donation* belonged to his acknowledged master, the Eastern Emperor. He had hired for a large sum, which he took care to make payable in heaven, a powerful stranger to rob his lawful sovereign for his own advantage, and without shame or hesitation he accepted the plunder. The French king may be dethroned and humbled by his servant, and the Greek Emperor may be robbed and defied by his priest, if the church be thereby aggrandized. Such has ever been the policy of Rome.

But the munificent donation of Pepin—who died in the year 768—awaited the confirmation of his son, Charlemagne. In the year 774, when the Lombards once more threatened the Roman territories, the aid of France was implored. Charlemagne proceeded to their help. He arrived in Rome on Easter-eve. The Romans, we are told, received the king with unbounded demonstrations of joy. Thirty thousand citizens went forth to meet him; the whole body of the clergy with crosses and banners; the children of the schools, who bore branches of palm and olive, and hailed him with hymns of welcome. He dismounted, and proceeded on foot towards St. Peter's church where the pope and all the clergy were

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in waiting. The king devoutly kissed each step of the stairs, and, on reaching the landing, kissed the pope, and entered the building holding his right hand. He spent the eve of Easter in devout exercises and prayers. But when the king's heart was warm and tender, pope Hadrian opened the subject of a *new deed of donation* to the holy see. Charlemagne now greatly enlarged the donation which Pepin had made to the church, confirmed it by an oath, and solemnly laid the deed of gift on the apostle's tomb. After the conclusion of the Easter solemnities, he took his leave of the pontiff, and rejoined his army. His arms were victorious everywhere; nor did he pause till he had entirely and finally subverted the empire of the Lombards, and proclaimed himself *King of Italy.*

THE TERRITORIAL DONATION OF CHARLEMAGNE.

The actual extent of his donation is very difficult to ascertain. But it seems to be the general opinion of the historians, that it included not only the exarchate of Ravenna but the dukedoms of Spoleto and Benevento, Venetia, Istria, and other territories in the north of Italy—in short, about the whole peninsula—with the island of Corsica. Every Naboth was robbed of his vineyard, and his blood shed, for the gratification of Jezebel's ambition, and for the establishment of her throne of iniquity. But mark the consummation and seal of all wickedness in the way that the pope sought to reconcile his character, as vicar of Christ, with his new position. As all men are subject to Christ, he reasoned, so likewise are they subject to his vicar and representative on earth in all that appertains to His kingdom. But that kingdom extends over all; therefore nothing

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belonging to this world or its affairs can be above or beyond the jurisdiction of St. Peter's chair. Our kingdom is not of this world; it is, like that of Christ, in all, above all, over all. According to this theory, no amount of temporal dominion was to be regarded as inconsistent with the Saviour's declaration respecting the nature of His kingdom. On this impious assumption the popes, thenceforward, ever acted. Hence their interference with priest and people, king and subject, land and sea, all over the world.

Charlemagne visited Rome again in 781, and a third time in 787, and on each occasion the church was enriched by gifts, bestowed, as he professed in the language of the age, "for the good of his soul." Overwhelmed with gratitude, and fully conscious of his own need of a permanent defender, the pope crowned Charlemagne on the Christmas-eve of the year 800, with the crown of the Western empire, and proclaimed him Cæsar Augustus. A Frankish prince, a Teuton, was thus declared the successor of the Cæsars, and wielded all the power of the Emperor of the West. "The empire of Charlemagne," says Milman, "was almost commensurate with Latin Christendom; England was the only large territory which acknowledged the ecclesiastical supremacy of Rome, not in subjection to the new Western empire."* This event forms the great epoch in the annals of Roman Christendom.

We must now leave the West for a time, and turn our attention to another great religious revolution which suddenly and unexpectedly sprang up in the East—Mahometanism.

* See Milman, vol. ii. Greenwood, vol. ii.

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CHAPTER XV.

MAHOMET, THE FALSE PROPHET OF ARABIA.

It has been with much interest, that we have traced the steady progress and subduing power of Christianity throughout the whole of Europe, during the seventh and eighth centuries, though in its Latin or Roman dress. The name of Jesus was spread abroad, and God could use the sweet savour of that name for blessing, in spite of the rigid formularies of Rome which everywhere surrounded it. But all these conquests of the gospel, through the management of the pope and the influence of his missionaries, became the conquests of the Roman See. How far her spiritual dominion might have extended, and how great her power might have become, had she met with no formidable opposition, it would be impossible to imagine. But God permitted an enemy to arise, who not only arrested the progress of Romanism on all sides, but more than once made the pontiff himself tremble for his safety even in the chair of St. Peter. This was Mahomet, the impostor of Arabia.

The beginning of the seventh century—the time when this remarkable man appeared—was peculiarly favourable for the accomplishment of his great object. Almost the whole world was mad after idols. The prevailing religion of his own country was grossly idolatrous. There were 360 idols in the temple of Mecca, which was the

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precise number of days in the Arab year. Paganism, with its numberless false gods, still covered a large portion of the earth; and even Christianity, alas! had become extensively idolatrous both in the Greek and Roman churches. It was at this moment that Mahomet appeared before the world as a stern and austere monotheist. He felt himself called to restore the fundamental doctrine of the divine unity to its due prominence in the religious belief of mankind. But the very idea of incarnation, of redemption, of a Redeemer, of relationship and communion with God—the pervading influences of a holy love have no place in the prophet's system. The yawning gulf that separates between God and the sinner is left impassable by the religion of Mahomet. But, before speaking of his system, we will briefly glance at his family and youth.

THE FAMILY AND YOUTH OF MAHOMET.

According to Arabian tradition, he was of the noble family of the Koreish. That tribe, the Koreishite, at the time of Mahomet's birth (which is generally placed about the year 569) was a kind of hierarchy exercising religious supremacy, and the acknowledged guardians of the Caaba, the sacred stone of Mecca with its temple. His father died soon after his birth, and his mother when he was very young; so that he was left an orphan and destitute. Other male members of his family having died, the governorship of Mecca, and the keys of the Caaba, passed into the hands of another branch of the family. Little is known of the first twenty-five years of his life, save that he engaged in mercantile pursuits, and was so successful and honourable in his dealings that he received the title of the *Amin*, or faithful. At the age

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of twenty-eight he married a widow of his kindred, possessed of great wealth. Twelve years after his marriage —in his fortieth year—the prophet began to listen to the intimations of his future mission. The misfortunes of his family and how to recover its ancient dignity and power may have been at first in his mind. According to a custom which was common among his countrymen, he withdrew every year to a cave in a mountain, and spent some time in religious solitude. It was in one of these caves, according to his own account, that he received his first communication from heaven, or rather, as we believe, from the dark abyss. He was, however, gradually wrought up to a belief that he was especially called of God to be an instrument for the destruction of idolatry and for the propagation of the true faith. His oracles, which he professed to receive direct from heaven by the angel Gabriel, are preserved in the Koran, and regarded by the faithful as the word of God.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM.

The new religion thus announced was Islam—a word which means *submission* or *resignation* to the will of God. His doctrine was summed up in his own aphorism, "There is no God but the true God, and Mahomet is his prophet." The six main articles in the theoretical faith of Islam were: 1, belief in God; 2, in His angels; 3, in His scriptures; 4, in His prophets; 5, in the resurrection and day of judgment; 6, in predestination. The practical part of the prophet's creed was equally unobjectionable, according to the prevalent thoughts of religious observance at the time. It embraces four great precepts; 1, prayers and purification; 2, alms; 3, fasting; 4, the pilgrimage to Mecca, which was held to be

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so essential that any one who died without performing it might as well have died a Jew or a Christian.

The only really new and startling article in the religion of Islam was the divine mission of Mahomet as the apostle and prophet of God. But in these fair appearances the craft of Satan is most manifest. Such simple and elementary religious principles would do violence to none but deceive many. History clearly proves that his opinions changed with his success, and that his violence and intolerance increased with his power, until it became a religion of the sword, of rapine, and of sensuality. "He is a gentle preacher," says Milman, "until he has unsheathed his sword." The sword once unsheathed is the remorseless argument. At one time we find the broad principle of Eastern toleration explicitly avowed: diversity of religion is ascribed to the direct ordinance, and all share in the equal favour, of God. But the Koran gradually recants all these gentler sentences, and assumes the language of insulting superiority or undisguised aversion. But, although the Koran has many points of resemblance both to Judaism and Christianity, it is thought that Mahomet was not acquainted with either the Old or the New Testament—that he rather drew his materials from Talmudical legends, from spurious Gospels, and other heretical writings, mixed with the old traditions of Arabia.

The first converts which Mahomet gained over to his new religion were among his friends and near relations; but the work of conversion proceeded very slowly. At the end of three years his followers only numbered fourteen. Not content with his progress, he resolved to make a public declaration of his religion. He first called upon his own family to recognize him as a prophet

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of God; and, having been accepted as the prophet of his family, he then aspired to be the prophet of his tribe. But his demands were refused by the Koreishites, his pretensions disbelieved, and himself and his followers persecuted.

MAHOMET'S TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO MEDINA.

Hitherto he had endeavoured to spread his opinions by persuasion only, but the people were obstinate and superstitious, and threatened the prophet with martyrdom. He was obliged to fly from his native city Mecca, the central spot of the commerce and of the religion of Arabia, and the hoped-for centre of his new spiritual empire. He fled to Medina, where he was received as a prince. Some of its most distinguished citizens had embraced his cause; a party had been already formed in his favour. His flight, A.D. 622, is regarded as the great era in the prophet's life, and as the foundation of the Mahometan chronology. Now that he was possessed of a force, he was charged by a fresh revelation to use it for the propagation of the faith. The character of his heavenly revelations was now changed; they became fierce and sanguinary. His mouth was filled, like the prophets of Ahab, with a lying spirit.

In a few years, after some fighting between the rival cities and the followers of the rival religions, the strength of the prophet so increased, that in 630 he gained possession of Mecca. He cleansed the Caaba of its 360 idols, and erected it into the great sanctuary of Islam. From that time Mecca becomes the centre of his system; the whole population swore allegiance; all the tribes of Arabia were now under his dominion and in the profession of his religion.

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MECCA THE CAPITAL OF ISLAM.

Mahomet was now lord of Mecca. The unity of God was proclaimed and his own prophetic mission from the highest pinnacle of the Mosque. The idols were broken to pieces. The old system of idolatry sank before the fear of his arms and the outward simplicity of his new creed. The next important step in the policy of the prophet was to secure the absolute religious unity of all Arabia. By this means the old hereditary feuds of the tribes and races disappeared, and all were turned into one united religious army against the infidels. War was now declared against all forms of unbelief, which was especially a declaration of war against Christendom, and an expressed determination to propagate Mahometanism by the power of his sword.

Mahomet is now an independent sovereign. Arabia, delivered from idols, embraces the religion of Islam. But, though the prophet is now a temporal prince and a successful warrior, he neglects not the duties of a priest. He constantly led the devotions of his followers, offered up the public prayers, and preached at the weekly festivals on the Fridays. He blasphemously assumed to be prophet, priest, and king. The mixture, the delusion, is the inspiration of hell; it is like the masterpiece of Satan, issuing from the realm of darkness. The fanaticism of his followers was urged on by the inducements of plunder, and the gratification of every evil passion. The appropriation of all female captives was recognized as one of the laws of war, and the reward held out to valour. The maxims inculcated on all the faithful were such as, "One drop of blood shed in the cause of God, or one night spent in arms, is of more

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avail than two months' employment in fasting and prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubims." The war cry of the intrepid Khaled, was "Fight on, fight on and fear not! Paradise, paradise, is under the shadow of your swords! Hell with its fires is behind him who flies from battle; paradise is open to him who falls in battle." Thus animated, the Moslem armies were fired with enthusiasm; and, thirsting for the spoils of victory here and a sensual paradise hereafter, they rushed fearlessly into battle.

The foundation of the Arabian empire was now laid. Mahomet summoned, not only the petty potentates of the neighbouring kingdoms, but the two great powers of the more civilized world, the king of Persia and the Emperor of the East, to submit to his religious supremacy. Heraclius is said to have received the communication with respect; but Chosroes, the Persian, contemptuously tore the letter to pieces: the prophet, on hearing of the act, exclaimed, "It is thus that God will tear the kingdom, and reject the supplications of Chosroes." And so it happened; the kingdom of Persia was reduced in a short time by the Mahometan arms to a few scattered communities. But though the circle of Islam was widening, the centre was passing away. Having followed his eldest son to the grave with tears and sighs, the prophet made his farewell pilgrimage to Mecca, and died in the year 632, and in the sixty-fourth year of his age. It would appear that he was untouched by remorse on his death-bed; but the blood he had shed,

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and the multitudes he had beguiled, would follow him to the judgment-seat.

The evil mission of the false prophet was fulfilled. He had organized the most terrible confederacy the world ever saw. In the short space of ten years he planted in the East a religion which has taken root so firmly, that amid all the revolutions and changes of twelve centuries it still exercises a powerful controlling influence over the minds and consciences of more than a *hundred millions* of human beings.

THE SUCCESSORS OF MAHOMET.

After the death of the prophet war was declared against mankind by his successors, the Caliphs. The chief of these were, Abou Beker, the wise; Omar, the faithful; Ali, the brave; Khaled, the sword of God. These were the oldest companions and relatives of the prophet. In a few months after his death these generals were followed by the swarms of the desert, and overflowed the plains of Asia. The history of these wars, though deeply affecting the progress of Christianity, lies not within the sphere of our "Short Papers." But as many nations and multitudes of the Lord's people were the victims of this fearful scourge, it fairly claims a brief consideration. Many believe that the Saracen locusts were a partial fulfilment of Revelation ix. 1–12.

The persecuting heathen, such as Chosroes the infidel and defiant king of Persia, and the merely nominal professors of Christianity, were alike chastised of God by the successors of Mahomet; but the proud bishops and priests were the especial objects of their vengeance. "Destroy not fruit-tree nor fertile field in your path," said the Caliphs; "be just, and spare the feelings of the

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vanquished. Respect all religious persons who live in hermitages or convents, and spare their edifices. But should you meet with a class of unbelievers of a different kind, who go about with shaven crowns, and belong to the synagogue of Satan, be sure you cleave their skulls, unless they embrace the true faith or render tribute." And so the mighty horde moved on with an enthusiasm which nothing could check. "Syria fell; Persia and Egypt fell; and many other countries yielded to their power." Many great cities, such as Jerusalem, Bozrah, Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria, Cyrene, and Carthage, fell into their hands. They also invaded India, assailed Europe, overran Spain, and advanced even to the banks of the Loire; but there they were defeated and driven back by Charles Martel in the year 732. We would only further notice their treatment of the vanquished in the case of Jerusalem.

In the year 637 Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Caliph Omar, who built a mosque on the site of the temple. The whole people of that guilty city were degraded into a marked and abject caste by the haughty conqueror. Everywhere they were to honour the Mussulmans, and give place before them. Christianity was subjected to the ignominy of toleration; the cross was no longer to be exhibited on the outside of the churches; the bells were to be silent; the Christians were to bewail their dead in secrecy; the sight of the devout Mussulman was not to be offended by the symbols of Christianity in any way; and his person was to be considered sacred, so that it was a crime in a Christian to strike a Mussulman.

Such was the condition to which the christian inhabitants of Jerusalem fell at once, and in which they remained

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undisturbed by any serious aggression of the Christians till the time of the crusades. Nearly the same terms, we may believe, were enforced on all the Christians in Syria. Thus did God in His holy providence deal with many nations both in the East and in the West that were thickly peopled with Jews and Christians, and doom millions to a long night of servitude under Mahometanism which continues to this day.*

REFLECTIONS ON MAHOMETANISM AND ROMANISM.

Having brought down our history, both civil and ecclesiastical, to the close of the eighth century, we may pause for a moment and reflect on what we have seen, where we are, and what we have to expect. We have watched the growth of the Roman See in the West, and how she gained the summit of her ambition. We have also seen the rise of a great antagonistic power in the East, inferior only in the extent of its religious and social influence to Christianity itself. The first sprang up gradually in the very centre of enlightened Christendom, the latter arose suddenly in an obscure district of a savage desert. But what, it may be asked, is the moral lesson to be drawn from the character and results of these two great powers? Both have been permitted by God, and, if we rightly judge, have been permitted by Him as a divine judgment on Christendom for its apostasy, and on the heathen for their idolatry. On the one hand, the war-cry was raised against all who refused faith or tribute to the creed and to the armies of the Caliphs; on the other hand, a more merciless war-cry

* See Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 4—52; James White's *Eighteen Christian Centuries*, p. 143.

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was raised against all who refused to believe in the Virgin and the saints, their visions and miracles, their relics and images, according to the intolerant demands of anti-christian Rome. The Eastern churches had been weakened and wasted from the days of Origen by a Platonic philosophy, in the form of a metaphysical theology, which caused continual dissension. In the West controversy had been greatly avoided: *power* was the object there. Rome had aspired, for centuries, to the dominion of Christendom—of the world. Both were judicially dealt with by God in the fiery deluge from Arabia; but Mahometanism remains as the mighty scourge of God in the East, and Romanism in the West.

MONOTHELITES, ICONOCLASM.

While the Arabs under Abou Beker and Omar were overrunning the Greek countries, and wresting province after province from the empire, the Emperor contented himself by sending out armies to repel them, and remained in his capital for the discussion of theological questions. From the conclusion of his successful wars with Persia, religion had become almost the exclusive object of his solicitude. Two great controversies were at that moment agitating the whole of the christian world. The first of these, the so-called *Monothelite* controversy, may be described generally as a revival, under a somewhat different form, of the old Monophysite, or Eutychian, heresy. Under the general name of *Monophysites* are comprehended the four main branches of separatists from the Eastern church, namely, the Syrian Jacobites, the Copts, the Abyssinians, and the Armenians. The originator of this numerous and powerful christian com-

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munity was Eutyches, abbot of a convent of monks at Constantinople in the fifth century. The Monophysites denied the distinction of the two natures in Christ; the Monothelites, on the other hand, denied the distinction of the will, divine and human, in the blessed Lord. A well-meant but unsuccessful attempt was made by the Emperor Heraclius to reconcile the Monophysites to the Greek church. But as the sound of controversy is seldom heard among the Eastern sectaries after this period, and as a detailed account of their disputes would possess no interest to our readers, we leave them on the pages of ecclesiastical history.*

ICONOCLASM, or the IMAGE-BREAKING storm, claims a fuller consideration. It went to the heart of Christendom as no other controversy had ever done before; and it forms an important epoch in the history of the Roman See. Jezebel now appears in her true colours, and from this time onward, her evil character is indelibly stamped on the papacy. The popes who then filled the chair of St. Peter, openly defended and justified image-worship. This was surely the beginning of the popedom—the maturity of the anti-christian system. The foundations of popery were laid bare, and it was thus seen that persecution and idolatry were the two pillars on which her arrogant dominion rested.

THE FIRST VISIBLE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN VENERATION.

For more than three hundred years after the first

* For full details of the different sects, see Marsden's *Dictionary of Christian Churches and Sects*, and Gardner's *Faiths of the World.*

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publication of the gospel there is good reason to believe, that neither images nor any other visible objects of religious reverence were admitted into the public service of the churches, or adopted into the exercises of private devotion. Probably such a thing had never been thought of by Christians before the days of Constantine; and we can only regard it as an early fruit of the union of Church and State. Up till this period the great protest of Christians was against the idolatry of the heathen: for this they suffered unto death. And it is not a little remarkable, that the Empress Helena, Constantine's mother, was the first to excite the Christian mind to this degrading superstition. She is said, in her zeal for religious places, to have discovered and disinterred the wood of the "true cross." This was enough for the enemy's purpose. The predilection of human nature for objects of veneration was kindled; the flame spread rapidly; and the usual consequence—idolatry—followed.

Similar memorials of the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, the inspired Apostles, and the Fathers, were found. The most sacred relics that had been concealed for centuries were now discovered by visions. So great, so successful, was the delusion of the enemy, that the whole church fell into the snare. From the age of Constantine till the epoch of the Arab invasion, a veneration for images, pictures and relics gradually increased. The reverence for *relics* was more characteristic of the Western, and that for *images* of the Eastern churches; but from the time of Gregory the Great the feeling of the West became more favourable to images. In consequence of the almost total decay of literature, both among the clergy and the laity, the use of images was found to give immense power to the priesthood. Pictures, statues, and

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visible representations of sacred objects, became the readiest mode of conveying instruction, encouraging devotion, and strengthening religious sentiments in the minds of the people. The more intellectual or enlightened of the clergy might endeavour to maintain the distinction between respect for images as a *means* and not as *objects* of worship. But the undiscriminating devotion of the vulgar utterly disregards these subtleties. The apologist may draw fine distinctions between images as objects of reverence and objects of adoration; but there can be no doubt that with ignorant and superstitious minds the use, the reverence, the worship of images, whether in pictures or statues, invariably degenerates into idolatry.

Before the close of the sixth century idolatry was firmly established in the Eastern church, and during the seventh century it made a gradual and very general progress in the West, where it had previously gained some footing. It became usual to fall down before images, to pray to them, to kiss them, to adorn them with gems and precious metals, to lay the hand on them in swearing, and even to employ them as sponsors at baptism.

LEO ATTEMPTS THE ABOLITION OF IMAGE-WORSHIP ABOUT A.D. 726.

The Emperor Leo III., surnamed Isauricus, a prince of great abilities, had the boldness to undertake, in the face of so many difficulties, to purify the church of its detestable idols. As the writings of the unsuccessful party were carefully suppressed or destroyed, history is silent as to the Emperor's motives: but we are disposed to believe that the new creed and the success of Mahomet greatly influenced Leo. Besides, there was a very general feeling among Christians in the East, that it was the

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increasing idolatry of the church that had brought down upon them the chastisement of God by the Mahometan invasion. The Christians were constantly hearing from both Jews and Mahometans the odious name of idolaters. The great controversy evidently arose out of these circumstances.

Leo ascended the throne of the East in the year 717; and, after securing the empire against foreign enemies, he began to concern himself with the affairs of religion. He vainly thought that he could change and improve the religion of his subjects by his own imperial command. About the year 726 he issued an edict against the *superstitious use* of images—not their destruction. We cannot suppose that the Isaurian was actuated by the fear of the true God in this, but rather that his motives were purely selfish. Being head of the empire and still ostensibly head of the church, he no doubt thought that by his edicts he could accomplish the total and simultaneous abolition of idolatry throughout the empire, and establish an ecclesiastical autocracy. But Leo had greatly overrated his temporal power in spiritual matters. The time was past for imperial edicts to change the religion of the empire. He had yet to learn to his deep mortification, the disdainful, insolent, haughty pride and power of the pontiffs, and the religious attachment of the people to their images.

The first edict merely interdicted the *worship* of images, and commanded them to be removed to such a height that they could not be touched or kissed. But the moment that the impious hand of the Emperor touched the idols, the excitement was immense and universal. The proscription affected all classes: learned and unlearned, priest and peasant, monk and soldier, clergy-

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men and laymen, men, women, and even children, were involved in this new agitation. The effect of the edict immediately occasioned a civil war both in the East and in the West. The monkish influence was especially strong. They set up a pretender to the throne, armed the multitude, and appeared in an ill-equipped fleet before Constantinople. But the Greek fire discomfited the disorderly assailants; the leaders were taken and put to death. Leo, provoked by the resistance which his edict had met with, issued a second and more stringent decree. He now commanded the *destruction* of all images, and the whitewashing of the walls on which such things had been painted.

THE SECOND EDICT PUBLISHED.

Sweeping as the second edict was, the imperial officers, it is said, went even beyond their orders. The most sacred statues and pictures were everywhere ruthlessly broken, torn to pieces, or publicly committed to the flames, under the eyes of the enraged worshippers. "Heedless of danger and death," says Greenwood, "men, women, and even children, rushed to the defence of objects as dear to them as life itself. They attacked and slew the imperial officers engaged in the work of destruction; the latter, supported by the regular troops, retaliated with equal ferocity; and the streets of the metropolis exhibited such a scene of outrage and slaughter as can only proceed from envenomed religious passions. The leaders of the tumult were for the most part put to death on the spot; the prisons were filled to repletion; and multitudes, after suffering various corporeal punishments, were transported to places of penal banishment."*

* Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri*, vol. iii. p. 474.

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The populace was now excited to fury; even the presence of the Emperor did not overawe them. An imperial officer had orders to destroy a statue of the Saviour, which stood over the Brazen Gate of the imperial palace, and was known by the name of the *Surety*. This image was renowned for its miracles, and was held in great veneration by the people. Crowds of women gathered about the place and eagerly entreated the soldier to spare their favourite. But he mounted the ladder, and with his axe struck the face which they had so often gazed upon, and which, they thought, benignly looked down upon them. Heaven interfered not, as they expected; but the women seized the ladder, threw down the impious officer, and tore him to pieces. The Emperor sent an armed guard to suppress the tumult; the mob joined the women, and a frightful massacre took place. "The Surety" was taken down, and its place was filled with an inscription in which the Emperor gave vent to his enmity against images.*

The execution of the imperial orders was everywhere resisted, both in the capital and the provinces; the popular enthusiasm was so great that it could only be quelled by the strongest efforts of the civil and military power. Passions were kindled on both sides which had their natural issue in the most daring rebellion and the most violent persecution.

THE POPE REJECTS THE EDICTS OF LEO.

The intelligence of the first assault of Leo against the images of Constantinople filled the Italians with grief and indignation; but when the orders arrived to put the

* J. C. Robertson, vol. ii. p. 83; Milman, vol. ii. p. 156.

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fatal decrees in force within the Italian dependencies of the empire, all rose to arms from the greatest to the least. The pope refused to obey orders and defied the Emperor; and all the people swore to live and die in the defence of the pope and the holy images. But the political complication of matters at that moment made it impossible for the Emperor to enforce his edicts in the papal dominions. Gregory addressed the Emperor in the most haughty strain; the tone of his reply to the imperial manifesto breathes a spirit of the most seditious defiance. The monks, who saw their craft in danger—the superstition to which they owed their riches and influence—preached against the Emperor as an abandoned apostate. He was painted by these slaves of idolatry as one who combined in himself every heresy that had ever polluted the Christian faith and endangered the souls of men. But as exhibiting the true spirit of popery, both in the defence of their darling superstition, idolatry, and in their defiance of the temporal power, we will transcribe parts of the original epistles of the second and third Gregory, leaving the reader to examine the portrait.

Pope Gregory II. says to the Emperor, "During ten pure and fortunate years, we have tasted the annual comforts of your royal letters, subscribed in purple ink with your own hand, the sacred pledges of your attachment to the orthodox creed of your fathers. How deplorable is the change! how tremendous the scandal! You now accuse the catholics of idolatry; and, by the accusation, you betray your own impiety and ignorance. To this ignorance we are compelled to adapt the grossness of our style and arguments: the first elements of holy letters are sufficient for your confusion; and, were you to enter a grammar school, and avow yourself the enemy

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of our worship, the simple and pious children would cast their tablets at your head."

After this disloyal and offensive salutation the pope attempts in the usual way the defence of image-worship. He endeavours to prove to Leo the vast difference between christian images, and the idols of antiquity. The latter were the fanciful representation of demons; the former are the genuine likeness of Christ, His mother, and His saints. He then appeals in justification of their worship to the decorations of the Jewish temple; the mercy-seat, the cherubim, and the various ornaments made by Bezaleel to the glory of God. Only the idols of the Gentiles, he affirms, were forbidden by the Jewish law. He denies that the catholics worship wood and stone: these are memorials only intended to awaken pious feelings.

In speaking of his own edification from beholding the pictures and images in the churches, we have a passage of great historical interest as shewing the usual subjects of these paintings. "The miraculous portrait of Christ sent to Abgarus, king of Edessa; the paintings of the Lord's miracles; the virgin mother, with the infant Jesus on her breast, surrounded by choirs of angels; the last supper; the raising of Lazarus; the miracles of giving sight to the blind, the curing the paralytic and the leper; the feeding the multitudes in the desert; the transfiguration; the crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrifice of Isaac."*

Gregory enters at length into the common arguments in behalf of images, and reproaches the Emperor with his

* Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 160.

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breach of the most solemn engagements, and then breaks out in a contemptuous tone, such as, "You demand a council:—revoke your edicts, cease to destroy images; a council will not be needed. You assault us, O tyrant, with a carnal and military band: unarmed and naked, we can only implore the Christ, the prince of the heavenly host, that He will send unto you a devil, for the destruction of your body and the salvation of your soul. You declare, with foolish arrogance, I will dispatch my orders to Rome, I will break in pieces the image of St. Peter; and Gregory, like his predecessor Martin, shall be transported in chains, and in exile, to the foot of the imperial throne. Would to God that I might be permitted to tread in the foot-steps of the holy Martin; but may the fate of Constans serve as a warning to the persecutors of the church. But it is our duty to live for the edification and support of the faithful people; nor are we reduced to risk our safety on the event of a combat. Incapable as you are of defending your Roman subjects, the maritime situation of the city may perhaps expose it to your depredations; but we have only to retire to the first fortress of the Lombards, and then you may as well pursue the winds. • Are you ignorant that the popes are the bond of union, the mediators of peace between the East and the West? The eyes of the nations are fixed on our humility; and they revere, as a God upon earth, the apostle St. Peter, whose image you threaten to destroy."

The conclusion of the pope's letter evidently refers to his new allies beyond the Alps. The Franks had dutifully listened to the papal recommendation of Boniface, the apostle of Germany. Secret negotiations were already begun to secure their assistance. The history and results

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of these we have, in a previous paper, examined. Hence the pope assured his royal correspondent, that "the remote and interior kingdoms of the West present their homage to Christ and His vicegerent: and we now prepare to visit one of their most powerful monarchs, who desires to receive from our hands the sacrament of baptism. The barbarians have submitted to the yoke of the gospel, while you alone are deaf to the voice of the Shepherd. These pious barbarians are kindled into rage; they thirst to avenge the persecutions of the East. Abandon your rash and fatal enterprise; reflect, tremble, and repent. If you persist, we are innocent of the blood that will be spilt in the contest; may it fall on your head."*

A LYING SPIRIT IN THE MOUTH OF POPERY.

After carefully reading these ancient epistles, it is impossible to believe that Gregory could have been so ignorant as to state so many things to Leo in favour of image-worship that were positively false: we are more inclined to believe that he knew them to be untrue, but counted on the ignorance of the Emperor. "You say," continued Gregory, "that we are forbidden to venerate things made by men's hands. But you are an unlettered person, and ought therefore to have inquired of your learned prelates the true meaning of the commandment. If you had not been obstinately and wilfully ignorant, you would have learned from them that your acts are in direct contradiction to the unanimous testimony of all the Fathers and doctors of the church, and in particular repugnant to the authority of the six general councils."

* See Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri*, vol. iii.

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So glaringly false are these statements, that we can only wonder how anyone could have had the effrontery to write them as true, especially the highest ecclesiastic in Christendom. But it proves that there has been from the beginning a lying spirit in the mouth of popery, as there was in the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings xxii. 23.) Even Greenwood says, "In none of the general councils does a word about images or image-worship occur. The statement as to the unanimous testimony of the fathers is equally at fault. Excepting in the works of Gregory the Great, I have not met with any mention of the practice of image-worship in the Fathers of the first six centuries of the christian era."*

But the lying spirit goes on to say, that the visible appearance of Christ in the flesh made such an impression on the minds of the disciples, that "no sooner had they cast their eyes upon Him than they hastened to make portraits of Him, and carried them about with them, exhibiting them to the whole world, that at the sight of them men might be converted from the worship of Satan to the service of Christ,—but so only that they should worship them, not with an absolute adoration, but only with a relative veneration." In like manner the pope assured Leo, that "pictures and images had been taken of James, the Lord's brother, of Stephen, and all other saints of note. And so having done, he dispersed them over every part of the earth, to the manifest increase of the gospel cause."

By a strange perversion or confusion of scriptural facts, the pope compares the Emperor with "the impious Uzziah, who," he tells him, "sacrilegiously removed the

* Greenwood, vol. iii. p. 476.

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brazen serpent, which Moses had set up, and broke it in pieces." Here we may give the pope the benefit of ignorance. He was less likely to know his Bible than the six general councils. He seems to have had some confused recollection of the story of Uzza, whom the Lord smote, because he put forth his hand to stay the ark when the oxen stumbled, and of the act of Hezekiah, who broke in pieces the brazen serpent expressly to prevent the people from paying divine homage to it. (1 Chron. xiii. 9; 2 Kings xviii. 4.) "Uzziah," he says, though it was really Hezekiah — "Uzziah truly was your brother, as self-willed, and, like thee, daring to offer violence to the priests of God." It might now be asked, what would the children of our schools say to the pope who mistook the good king Hezekiah for a wicked king, and his destroying the brazen serpent for an act of impiety? As well might we expect them to throw their tablets at Gregory's, as at Leo's head. But enough has been said on this point to shew the reader what has been the spirit and character of popery from its very foundation. It has ever been a barefaced, lying, idolatrous system, though countless numbers of God's saints have been in it during its darkest periods. The saving Name of Jesus has ever been maintained amidst its grossest absurdities and idolatries, and whosoever believes in that Name shall surely be saved. The finger of faith that touches but His garment's hem, though pressed through a throng of idolaters, opens the everlasting springs of all healing virtue, and the very fountain of disease is immediately dried up. And whatever the press or throng may be, He will look round to see the one that touched Him by faith, and speak peace to the troubled soul. Mark v. 25–34.

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CLOSE OF ICONOCLASM.

Gregory did not long survive his epistles. In the following year he was succeeded by a third pope of the same name. Gregory III. was also zealous in the cause of images, he laboured to increase the popular veneration for them. In Rome he set the example of image-worship on the most splendid scale. A solemn council was convoked, consisting of all the bishops of the Lombard and Byzantine territories in Northern Italy to the number of ninety-three. The assembly was held in the actual presence of the sacred relics of the apostle Peter, and was attended by the whole body of the city clergy, the consuls, and a vast concourse of people; and a decree was framed, unanimously adopted and signed by all present, to the effect that, "If *any person* should hereafter, in contempt of the ancient and faithful customs of all Christians, and of the apostolic church in particular, stand forth as a destroyer, defamer, or blasphemer of the sacred images of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, and of His mother, the immaculate ever-Virgin Mary, of the blessed apostles, and all other saints, he be excluded from the body and blood of the Lord, and from the communion of the universal church."*

Leo, indignant at the pope's audacity, arrested his messengers, and resolved to fit out a numerous fleet and army to reduce Italy into better subjection. But this Greek Armada encountered a terrible storm in the Adriatic; the fleet was disabled, and Leo was compelled to postpone his designs for enforcing the execution of his edicts against images in the Italian dependencies

* *Cathedra Petri*, vol. iii. p. 480.

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of the empire. He indemnified himself, however, by confiscating the papal revenues in Sicily, Calabria, and other parts of his dominions, and transferring Greece and Illyricum from the Roman patriarchate to that of Constantinople. But here, with both, the scene closes, but not the contest. Gregory and Leo both died in 741. The Emperor was succeeded by his son Constantine, whose reign extended to the unusual length of thirty-four years. Gregory was succeeded by Zachary, a man of great ability, and deeply imbued with the spirit of popery. To the end of his reign, Constantine was unrelenting in his enmity against the worshippers of images. He is blamed for great cruelty towards the monks, but he was no doubt provoked to the last degree by their violent and fanatical behaviour.

IRENE, wife to the son and heir of Constantine, an ambitious, intriguing, haughty princess, seized the government on the death of her feeble husband, in the name of her son, who was only ten years old. She dissembled for a time her designs for the restoration of images. Policy and idolatry took counsel together in her heart. She was jealous, crafty, and cruel. Her history is the record of inward hatred and treachery with an outward appearance of courtesy. But we have only to do with the religious part of her reign.

THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICE.

Decrees were issued for a council to be held at Nice —a city, hallowed by the sittings of the first great council of Christendom—to decide the question of image-worship. The number of ecclesiastics present was about 350. Her chosen men took the lead; everything was, no

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doubt, pre-arranged. Among the preliminary acts of the council, it was debated to what class of heretics the Iconoclasts were to be ascribed. Tarasius, president of the assembly, asserted that it was worse than the worst heresy, being an absolute denial of Christ. The whole proceedings of the council were characterized by the same condemnatory tone towards the adversaries of image-worship. After assenting to the decrees of the first six councils, and to the anathemas against the heretics denounced therein, they passed—acting, as they declared, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—the following canon:

"With the venerable and life-giving cross shall be set up the venerable and holy images, whether in colours, in mosaic work, or any other material, within the consecrated churches of God, on the sacred vessels and vestments, on the walls and on tablets, in houses and in highways. The images, that is to say, of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ; of the immaculate mother of God; of the honoured angels; of all saints and holy men—these images shall be treated as holy memorials, worshipped, kissed, only without that peculiar adoration which is reserved for the Invisible, Incomprehensible God. All who shall violate this, as is asserted, immemorial tradition of the church, and endeavour, forcibly or by craft, to remove any image, if ecclesiastics, are to be deposed and excommunicated; if monks or laymen, to be excommunicated."

The council was not content with this formal and solemn subscription. With one voice they broke out into a long acclamation. "We all believe, we all assert, we all subscribe. This is the faith of the apostles, this is the faith of the church, this is the faith of the ortho-

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dox, this is the faith of all the world. We who adore the Trinity worship images. Whoever does not the like, anathema upon them! Anathema on all who call images idols! Anathema on all who communicate with them who do not worship images. . . . Everlasting glory to the orthodox Romans, to John of Damascus! To Gregory of Rome, everlasting glory! Everlasting glory to all the preachers of truth!"

HELENA AND IRENE.

Thus ended the most critical question that had ever been raised since Christianity became the religion of the Roman world. By the seventh general council, idolatry was formally and vehemently established as the worship of the great papal system, and anathemas denounced against all who would dare to depart from it. Hence the merciless persecution of so-called separatists. But it is worthy of note, as according with our view of Jezebel's character, that a woman was the first mover in the worship of images, and a woman was the restorer of images when they had been cast down. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, was a blameless and devout woman, but she was used of the enemy to introduce exciting relics and sacred memorials which changed Christianity from a purely spiritual worship to that paganizing form of religion which grew up with such rapidity in the succeeding centuries. The crafty Irene was again used of Satan to restore and re-establish the worship of images. From that day to this both the Greek and Latin churches have adhered to that form of worship, and maintained the sanctity of their images.

The *political* results of the Iconoclastic controversy

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were equally great and important. Rome now burst the bonds of her connection with the East, separating herself for ever from the Byzantine empire ; and Greek Christianity from this time becomes a separate religion, and the empire a separate state. The West, receiving a great accession of power through this revolution, ultimately created its own empire, formed alliances with the Frankish kings, and placed the crown of the Western empire on the head of Charlemagne, as we have already seen.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE SILVER LINE OF SOVEREIGN GRACE.

THE papal monarchy is now established. The court of France and the papacy are united. Rome is now dissevered from the East, and become the centre of influence over all the West. But having traced the dark lines of the apostasy of Latin Christianity from the beginning of the fourth to the beginning of the ninth century, we will now turn for a little and endeavour to trace the *silver line* of God's sovereign grace in those who separated from her communion during the same period. If Satan was active in corrupting the outward church, God was active in gathering out His own from the corrupt mass, and strengthening them as His own special witnesses. From the days of Augustine, the noble witness for grace against Pelagianism in Western Christendom, down to the Reformation, a line of faithful witnesses may be traced who testified against the idolatry and tyranny of Rome, and preached salvation through faith in Christ Jesus without works of merit.* Besides multitudes who were nourished in private, both in convents and families, on the simple truth of the gospel, we would briefly notice some of the most prominent who form an important link in the great chain of witnesses, especially as connected with the history of the church in Europe.

* See E. B. Elliott's *Horæ Apoc.*, vol. ii. p. 219.

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THE NESTORIANS AND THE PAULICIANS.[1]

The rise of the Nestorians in the fifth century and their great missionary zeal have been already mentioned. At their head stood a bishop known by the title of *Patriarch of Babylon.* His residence was originally at Seleucia. From Persia, it is said, they carried the gospel to the North, the East, and the South. In the sixth century they preached the gospel with great success to the Huns, the Indians, the Medes, and the Elamites: on the coast of Malabar, and the isles of the ocean, great numbers were converted. Following the course of trade, the missionaries made their way from India to China, and penetrated across the deserts to its northern frontier. In 1625 a stone was discovered by the Jesuits near Singapore, which bears a long inscription, partly Syriac and partly Chinese, recording the names of missionaries who had laboured in China, and the history of Christianity in that country from the year 636–781. But the propagation of Christianity, it is thought, awakened the jealousy of the State, and, after witnessing the success of the gospel, and experiencing persecution, they probably were exterminated, or fled, about the close of the eighth century. The Nestorians were patronized by some of the Persian kings, and under the reign of the caliphs they were protected and prospered greatly. They assumed the designation of Chaldean Christians, or Assyrians, and still exist under that name.*

The doctrines, character and history of the *Paulicians*

* See *Faiths of the World,* vol. ii. p. 527; J. C. Robertson, vol. ii. p. 163.

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have been subjects of great controversy; but they have not been allowed to speak for themselves to posterity. Their writings were carefully destroyed by the catholics, and they are known to us only through the reports of bitter enemies who brand them as heretics, and as the ancestors of the protestant reformers. On the other hand some protestant writers accept the pedigree, and assert that they were the maintainers of a purely scriptural Christianity, which may have appeared to the papacy as heretical. This latter circumstance, from what we have already shewn, will be easily believed. The most grievous corruptions both in the doctrine and the worship of the catholic church had been not only admitted but enforced long before the rise of the Paulicians. Neither the spirit nor the simplicity of the gospel remained; hence, scriptural christianity must have appeared to the image-worshippers as a heresy.

Passing over many individual names from the time of St. Augustine, who were worthy witnesses of the truth, we will come at once and inquire into

THE ORIGIN OF THE PAULICIANS. A.D. 653.

The Gnostics, who had been so numerous and powerful during the early days of Christianity, were now an obscure remnant, chiefly confined to the villages along the borders of the Euphrates. They had been driven by the all-powerful catholics from the capitals of the East and the West, and the remains of their different sects passed under the general and odious name of the *Manicheans*.

In this region, at the village of Mananalis, near Samosata, lived about the year 653 one Constantine, who

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is described by the Roman writers as descended from a Manichean family. Soon after the Saracens' conquest of Syria, an Armenian deacon, who was returning from captivity among the Saracens, became the guest of Constantine. In acknowledgment of his hospitality, the deacon made him a present of a manuscript, containing the four Gospels and the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul. This was indeed a rare gift, as the scriptures were already concealed from the laity. The study of these sacred books produced a complete revolution in his religious principles, and in the whole subsequent course of his life. Some say he had been trained in Gnosticism, others, that he was a member of the Greek established church; but, however this may have been, those books now became his only study and the rule of his faith and practice.

Constantine now thought of forming a new sect, or rather, of restoring apostolic Christianity. He renounced and cast away his Manichean books, say his enemies; he abjured Manicheism, and made it a law to his followers not to read any other books whatsoever, but the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament. This may have given their enemies a pretext for charging them with rejecting the Old Testament and the two Epistles of St. Peter. But it is more than probable that they did not possess these portions of the word of God. It is to be feared however, from their peculiar attachment and devotion to the writings and character of St. Paul, that other scriptures were neglected.

It is generally agreed that the word *Paulician* is formed from the name of the great apostle of the Gentiles. His fellow-labourers, Sylvanus, Timothy, Titus, Tychicus, were represented by Constantine and

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his disciples; and their congregations, as they sprang up in different places, were called after the names of the apostolic churches. It is difficult to see, in this "innocent allegory," as it has been termed, how the catholics could have been so grievously offended with the Paulicians, or could have found a pretext for hunting them down with fire and sword. Yet so they did, as we shall presently see. Their unpardonable sin was their separation from the State church; their testimony against superstition and apostasy; their reviving the memory of a pure primitive Christianity.

SYLVANUS AT CIBOSSA.

Constantine, who styled himself *Sylvanus*, addressed his first appeals to the inhabitants of a place called Cibossa in Armenia, whom he styled *Macedonians*. "I am Sylvanus," he said, "you are Macedonians." There he fixed his residence and laboured with untiring energy for nearly thirty years, and made many converts, both from the catholic church and the Zoroastrian religion. At length, the sect having become sufficiently considerable to attract attention, the matter was reported to the Emperor, and an edict was issued, A.D. 684, against Constantine and the Paulician congregations. The execution of the decree was entrusted to an officer of the imperial court named Simeon. He had orders to put the teacher to death, and to distribute his followers among the clergy and in monasteries, with a view to their being reclaimed. The government no doubt ordered as directed by the church; as in the case of Ahab, "whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." (1 Kings xxi. 25.) But the Lord is above all, and He can make the wrath of man to praise Him.

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Simeon placed Constantine—the chief object of the priests' revenge — before a large number of his companions, and commanded them to stone him. They refused, and, instead of obeying, all dropped the stones with which they were armed, excepting one young man; and Constantine was killed by a stone from the hand of that heartless youth—his own adopted son Justus. This ungrateful apostate has been extolled by the enemies of the Paulicians, as another David who with a stone slew another Goliath—the giant of heresy. But from the stoning of Constantine, as from the stoning of Stephen, a new leader was raised up in the person of his imperial murderer. Impressions were made on Simeon's mind by what he had seen and heard that he could not shake off. He entered into conversation with some of the sectaries, and the result was that he became their convert. He returned to the imperial court, but after spending three years at Constantinople in great uneasiness of mind, he fled, leaving all his property behind him, and took up his abode at Cibossa, where, under the name of *Titus*, he became the successor of Constantine Sylvanus.

About five years after the martyrdom of Constantine the same renegade Justus betrayed the Paulicians. He knew, like the traitor of old, the habits and movements of the community, and also where he would be rewarded for his treachery. He went to the bishop of Colonia, and reported the revival and spread of the so-called heresy. The bishop communicated his information to the Emperor Justinian II., and, in consequence, Simeon, and a large number of his followers were burnt to death on one large funeral pile. The cruel Justinian vainly thought to extinguish the name and memory of the Paulicians in a single conflagration, but the blood of

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the martyrs seemed but to multiply their numbers and strength. A succession of teachers and congregations arose from their ashes. The new sect spread over all the adjacent regions, Asia Minor, Pontus, the borders of Armenia and to the westward of the Euphrates. They bore, during many successive reigns, with christian patience, the intolerant wrath of the rulers, through the instigation of the priests. But the prize for cruelty, as one observes, must doubtless be awarded to the sanguinary devotion of Theodora, who restored the images to the Oriental church.

ANOTHER JEZEBEL IN POWER.
A.D. 842.

After the death of the Emperor Theophilus, Theodora his widow governed as regent during the minority of her son. Her concealed attachment to idolatry was well known to the priesthood. And no sooner was Theophilus dead than she applied herself to the complete accomplishment of her great object. When the way was clear, a solemn festival was appointed for the restoration of images. "The whole clergy of Constantinople, and all who could flock in from the neighbourhood, met in and before the palace of the archbishop, and marched in procession with crosses, torches, and incense, to the church of St. Sophia. There they were met by the Empress and her infant son Michael. They made the circuit of the church, with their burning torches, paying homage to every statue and picture, which had been carefully restored, never again to be effaced till the days of later, more terrible Iconoclasts, the Ottoman Turks."*

* *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 202.

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After so triumphant a re-establishment of images, the victorious party no doubt thought the right time was come to propose and endeavour to secure another triumph; they now urged the Empress to undertake the entire suppression of the Paulicians. They had preached against images, relics, and the rotten wood of the cross. They were not fit to live. The catholics gained their object! An edict was issued under the regency of Theodora, which decreed that the Paulicians should be exterminated by fire and sword, or brought back to the Greek church. But they refused all attempts which were made to gain them, and the fiery demon of persecution was let loose among them. Her inquisitors explored the cities and mountains of the lesser Asia, and executed their commission in the most cruel manner. The numbers of the sect, and the severity of the persecution may be judged by the multitudes who were slain by the sword, beheaded, drowned, or consumed in the flames. It is affirmed by both civil and ecclesiastical historians, that, in a short reign, *one hundred thousand* Paulicians were put to death. Was there ever a more genuine daughter of Jezebel? She had not even an Ahab to stir up to do this cruel work, but with her own hand, as it were—alas! a woman's hand—by her own decree, she slaughtered *one hundred thousand* of God's saints,* re-established the worship of idols, and nourished with royal favour the idolatrous priests of Rome.

The history of Iconoclasm has been remarkable for female influence. Helena was the first to suggest and encourage veneration for relics; Irene was the restorer

* We do not mean to affirm that all who were slain by Theodora as Paulicians were true Christians. We cannot judge the heart; but they professed to be and willingly died as martyrs.

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of image-worship when threatened with destruction; and now Theodora not only re-establishes the idolatry which her husband had endeavoured to suppress, but persecutes the true worshippers. Surely that woman Jezebel—symbol of the dominant church in the dark ages—has her antitype in these three women, especially the last two. The likeness is too striking to be questioned. But the whole system of Catholicism breathes the fearful spirit, and is characterized by the dark features of Jezebel's character. The word of the Lord cannot be broken. "There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom *Jezebel his wife stirred up.*" This is the type. The antitype is, "I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest *that woman Jezebel*, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." 1 Kings xxi. 25; Revelation ii. 20, 21.

ROME'S ADMIRATION OF THEODORA'S CONDUCT.

Nicolas I., who became pope of Rome in 858, highly commends, by letter, the conduct of the superstitious and cruel Theodora. He especially admires and approves her implicit obedience to the Roman See. "She resolved," he says, "to bring the Paulicians to the true faith, or cut them all off root and branch. Pursuant to that resolution, she sent noblemen and magistrates into the different provinces of the empire; and by them some of those unhappy wretches were crucified, some put to the sword, and some thrown into the sea and drowned." Nicolas at the same time observes, that the

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heretics, experiencing in her all the resolution and vigour of a man, could scarcely believe her to be a woman. Indeed the blinding power of an idolatrous superstition had changed in Theodora (as it did in our queen, "the bloody Mary") the tender and compassionate heart of a woman into that of a merciless and blood-thirsty tyrant. From the pope's own words, it is perfectly evident, that the Roman See had chiefly to do with the slaughter of the Paulicians. After telling her that the heretics dreaded, and at the same time admired, her resolution and steadiness in maintaining the purity of the catholic faith, he adds, "*and why so, but because you followed the directions of the Apostolic See?*"*

It is difficult to believe that the professed vicar of Christ, and the shepherd of His sheep could ever have put on record such sayings. But so he was permitted, and thus they have come down to us as the true witness of the established antichristian tyranny of Rome in the ninth century.

THE PAULICIANS REBEL AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.

Like certain of the Albigenses, Hussites of Bohemia, and Calvinists of France—the Paulicians of Armenia and the adjacent provinces determined on more decided resistance to their persecutors. This was their sad failure, and the sad fruit of listening to the suggestions of Satan. For nearly two hundred years they had suffered as Christians, adorning the gospel by a life of faith and patience. So far as we have the means of judging, they seem to have maintained the truth through a long course of suffering, in the noble, though passive

* Milner, vol. ii. p. 498.

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spirit of conformity to Christ. But faith and patience failed at length, and they openly rebelled against the government. It happened in this way:

CARBEAS, an officer of high rank in the imperial service, on hearing that his father had been impaled by the catholic inquisitors, renounced his allegiance to the empire, and, with five thousand companions, sought a refuge among the Saracens. The Caliph gladly welcomed the deserters, and gave them leave to settle within his territory. Carbeas built and fortified the city of Tephrice, which became the head-quarters of the Paulicians. They naturally flocked to this new home, and sought an asylum from the imperial laws. They soon became a powerful community. Under the command of Carbeas, war was waged with the empire, and maintained with various success for more than thirty years; but as details would be more depressing than interesting, we forbear.

THE PAULICIANS IN EUROPE.

About the middle of the eighth century, Constantine, surnamed Copronymus, either as a favour or as a punishment, transplanted a great number of Paulicians into Thrace, an outpost of the empire; and there they acted as a religious mission. By this emigration their doctrines were introduced and diffused in Europe. They seem to have laboured with great success amongst the Bulgarians. It was in order to guard the infant church of Bulgaria, that Peter of Sicily, about the year 870, addressed to the archbishop of the Bulgarians a tract warning him against the infection of the Paulicians. This document is the chief source of information as to

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the sect. In the tenth century the Emperor John Zimisces conducted another great migration to the valleys of Mount Hæmus. Their history after this period is European. They were favoured with a free toleration in the land of their exile, which greatly softened their condition and strengthened their community. From these Bulgarian settlements, their way was opened into Western Europe. Many native Bulgarians associated with them; hence the name of Bulgarians, in a coarse, or corrupted form, is one of the appellations of hatred, which clung to the Paulicians in all quarters.

As to the subsequent religious history of these interesting people historians are greatly divided. Nothing is known of them but from the writings of their enemies: therefore, in common justice, we are bound to suspend our belief of their statements. One thing however is certain; they protested against the saint and image-worship of the catholics, and the legitimacy of the priesthood by which idolatry was upheld. They also protested against many things in the doctrines, the discipline, and the assumed authority of the church of Rome. The catholic writers usually speak of them as *Manicheans*—the most odious of all heretics. But there are some protestant writers, who have examined with great care all that can throw light on their history, and have come to the conclusion, that they were guiltless of the heresies imputed to them, and maintain that they were the true and faithful witnesses of Christ and His truth during a very dark period of the middle ages.*

* For a careful inquiry and details, see *Horæ Apoc.*, vol. ii. 249—344, 5th edition.

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It also appears very certain, that the Albigenses of the southern provinces of France owe their origin to the Paulicians. If so, we shall meet with them again, a little farther on. For the present we turn to our general history.

THE RELIGIOUS WARS OF CHARLEMAGNE. FROM ABOUT 771–814.

Ecclesiastical history, so-called, from the time of Pepin, is so interwoven with the history of the Frankish kings, and the disgraceful intrigues of the popes, that we must further, though briefly, trace the course of events which have an important bearing on the character of popery and the history of the church.

The rising power of Charlemagne, the younger son of Pepin, was watched by the occupants of St. Peter's chair with the greatest possible interest, and skilfully used by them for the accomplishment of their ambitious designs. Pope Hadrian I. and Leo III., both able men, filled the papal throne during the long reign of Charles; and succeeded in greatly aggrandizing, through what he called his religious wars, the Roman See.

A quarrel between Desiderius king of the Lombards and Pope Hadrian led to a war with France, which ended in the complete overthrow of the Lombard kingdom in Italy. This was the result of the grand scheme of the papacy, and brought about by the unprincipled and treacherous policy of the pontiff. Charles was son-in-law to Desiderius; but after one year's wedlock, he divorced Hermingard the Lombard's daughter, and immediately married Hildegard, a lady of a noble Swabian house. The insulted father, on receiving back his repudiated daughter, naturally sought for redress from the pope

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—the head of the church, of which Charles was so dutiful a son. But although the church—when suiting its own purposes—had asserted in the strongest terms the sanctity of the marriage bond, its open violation in this instance was passed quietly over; the pope refused to interfere.

Rome was reckoning on good service from the great Charles, and could not afford to risk his displeasure. Not a word was said against the conduct of the dissolute monarch. Desiderius at length resented the bitter insult of Charles and the wicked connivance of Hadrian; he appeared at the head of his troops in papal Italy; he besieged, stormed, and spread devastation everywhere, and threatened the pope in his capital.

HADRIAN SENDS FOR CHARLEMAGNE.

The pope now sent messages in the utmost haste to entreat immediate help from Charles; at the same time diligently superintending in person the military preparations for the defence of the city and the security of its treasures. And, according to an old strategy of Rome, Hadrian sent three bishops to over-awe the king and to threaten him with excommunication if he dared to violate the property of the church. The pope thus gained time; and Charles, with his usual rapidity, assembled his forces, crossed the Alps, and laid siege to Pavia. During the siege, which continued several months, Charles paid a visit to the pope in great state, and was received with every honour. He was hailed by nobles, senators and citizens, as patrician of Rome, and the dutiful son of the church, who had so speedily obeyed the summons of his spiritual father, and had come to deliver them from the hated and dreaded Lombards. When the holy season was over, Charles and his officers returned to the army.

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Pavia at length fell. Desiderius, successor of the great and wise Luitprand, was dethroned, and took refuge in a monastery—the usual asylum of dethroned kings—his valiant son, Adelchis, fled to Constantinople; and thus expired the kingdom of the Lombards; the deadly enemies of the Italians, and the great hindrance to the papal aggression. The way was now clear for the conqueror to give the pope a kingdom, not on paper merely, like his father Pepin, but in cities, provinces, and revenues. And so he did; and thereby ratified the munificent gift of his father. As lord by conquest, Charlemagne presented to the successors of St. Peter, by an absolute and perpetual grant, the kingdom of Lombardy; some say, the whole of Italy. At the same time Charles claimed the royal title, and exercised a kind of sovereignty over all Italy and even over Rome itself. But the pope, being now secure in the possession of the territory, could well afford to allow all royal honours to his great benefactor.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ROMAN PONTIFFS. A.D. 775.

The pope was now a temporal prince. The long looked for and sighed for day was come; the fond dream of centuries was realized. The successors of St. Peter are proclaimed sovereign pontiffs and lords of the city and territories of Rome. The last link of the shadowy vassalage and subserviency to the Greek empire is broken for ever; and Rome has again become the acknowledged capital of the West.

The great Pope Hadrian at once assumes the power, privileges, and language of a temporal sovereign to whom fealty is due. Murmurs from Ravenna and the

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East were speedily silenced; and Rome reigned supreme. The pope's language even to Charlemagne is that of an equal: "As your men," he said, "are not allowed to come to Rome without your permission and special letter, so *my men* must not be allowed to appear at the court of France without the same credentials from me." He claimed the same allegiance from the Italians which the subjects of Charlemagne owed to him. "The administration of justice was in the pope's name; not only the ecclesiastical dues, and the rents of estates forming part of the patrimony of St. Peter, the civil revenue likewise came into his treasury. . . . Hadrian, with the power, assumed the magnificence of a great potentate . . . . Rome, with the increase of the papal revenues, began to resume more of her ancient splendour."

THE GREAT EPOCH IN THE ANNALS OF POPERY.

As the empire of Charlemagne is in a peculiar manner connected with the history of the church, and forms the great epoch in the annals of the Roman See, it demands a fuller consideration. Roman catholicism was just about as much indebted to that great prince, as Mahometanism was to the great Arab prophet and his successors. "The Saxon wars of Charlemagne," says Milman, "which added almost the whole of Germany to his dominions, were avowedly religious wars. If Boniface was the Christian, Charlemagne was the Mahometan, apostle of the gospel. The declared object of his invasions was the extinction of heathenism, subjection to the christian faith, or extermination. Baptism was the sign of subjugation and fealty; the Saxons accepted or threw it off according as they were in a state of submission or revolt. These wars were inevitable;

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they were but the continuance of the great strife waged for centuries from the barbarous North and East, against the civilized South and West; only that the Roman and christian population, now invigorated by the large infusion of Teutonic blood, instead of waiting aggression, had become the aggressor. The tide of conquest was rolling back; the subjects of the Western kingdoms, of the Western empire, instead of waiting to see their homes overrun by hordes of fierce invaders, now boldly marched into the heart of their enemies' country, penetrated their forests, crossed their morasses, and planted their feudal courts of justice, their churches, and their monasteries, in the most remote and savage regions, up to the Elbe and the shores of the Baltic."

The Saxons were divided into three leading tribes, the Ostphalians, the Westphalians, and the Angarians. Each clan, according to old Teutonic usage, consisted of nobles, freemen, and slaves; but at times the whole nation met in a great armed convention. The Saxons scorned and detested the Romanized Franks, and the Franks held the Saxons to be barbarians and heathens. For three-and-thirty years, the powerful Charles was engaged in subduing these wild Saxon hordes. "The tract of country inhabited by these tribes," says Greenwood, "comprehended the whole of the modern circle of Westphalia, and the greater portion of that of lower Saxony, extended from the Lippe to the Weser and the Elbe; bordering to the Northward upon the kindred Jutes, Angles, and Danes; and to the Eastward of Sclavic origin, who had gradually advanced upon the more ancient Teutonic races of Eastern Germany." But we must limit ourselves chiefly to the religious aspect of these wars; still, it is interesting at this moment to study

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these ancient records, as we have just witnessed the conclusion of the great war of 1870–71 between the descendants of the Franks and Germans of antiquity.

THE SWORD OF CHARLEMAGNE OR BAPTISM.

The professed object of Charlemagne was to establish Christianity in the remote parts of Germany, but it must ever be regretted that he used such violent means to accomplish his end. Thousands were forced into the waters of baptism to escape a cruel death. The sword or baptism were the conqueror's terms. A law was enacted which denounced the penalty of death against the refusal of baptism. He could offer no terms of peace, enter into no treaty, of which baptism should not be the principal condition. Conversion or extermination was the watchword of the Franks. And though the old religion might sit loosely enough on the conscience of the Saxon, he could see nothing better in the new; for to his mind baptism was identified with slavery, and Christianity with subjugation to a foreign yoke. To submit to baptism was to renounce, not only his old religion, but his personal freedom.

With such anti-Christian, such inhuman, feelings the war was carried on, as we have said, for thirty-three years. At the head of his superior armies, he oppressed the savage tribes, who were incapable of confederating for their common safety; nor did he ever, it is said, encounter an equal antagonist in numbers, in discipline, or in arms. But after a struggle of incalculable bloodshed, and of almost unexampled obstinacy and duration, the numbers, the discipline, and the valour of the Franks prevailed at length over the undisciplined and desultory efforts of the Saxons. "The remnant of thirty cam-

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paigns of undistinguished slaughter," says Greenwood, "and wholesale expatriation, accepted baptism, and became permanently incorporated with the empire of the Franks and Christianity. Abbeys, monasteries, and religious houses of all descriptions sprang up in every part of the conquered territory, and the new churches were supplied with ministers from the school of Boniface—a school which admitted no distinction between the law of Christ and the law of Rome."

Baptism was the only security and pledge of peace which the Franks would accept for the submission of the Saxons. And thus it was—how sad and humbling to relate!—when the conquest was complete, and the carnage over, the priests entered the field. Their office was to baptize the vanquished. Thousands of the barbarians were thus forced, at the point of the sword, into what the priests called *the regenerating waters of baptism*. But to the Saxons their baptism meant neither more nor less than the renunciation of their religion and their liberty. The consequence was, that no sooner were the armies of Charles withdrawn, than the indefatigable Saxons rose again, and burst through the encroaching limits of the empire, ravaging as they went. In their burning rage and bitter revenge they hewed down crosses, burnt churches, destroyed monasteries, slaughtered their inmates, respected neither age nor sex, until the whole country seemed wrapped in flames and deluged with blood. Such revolts, it is said, were often provoked by the insolent language, and still more by the offensive demeanour of the missionary monks, and the severe avarice with which they exacted their tithes. But such outbursts on the part of the Saxons, were followed by a fresh invasion and a merciless

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slaughter by the Franks, until tribe after tribe yielded to the conquering arms of Charlemagne. On one occasion after a severe revolt Charles massacred 4,500 brave warriors in cold blood who had surrendered. This cruel and cowardly abuse of power leaves a dark—an indelible stain on his history, which no apology can ever remove. Even the sceptic historian alludes to it in a most truthful and touching way. "In a day of equal retribution," he says, "the sons of his brother Carloman, the Merovingian princes of Aquitaine, and the four thousand five hundred Saxons who were beheaded on the same spot, would have something to allege against the justice and humanity of Charlemagne. His treatment of the vanquished Saxons was an abuse of the right of conquest."

THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF THE POPE'S MISSIONARIES.

Sad as it is to reflect on the fearful slaughter of the Saxons, and the forced baptism of the helpless remnant, our sadness is infinitely increased when we find that the professed messengers of mercy were the great movers in these long and exterminating wars. In place of being the merciful missionaries of the gospel of peace, they were in reality the cruel emissaries of the papacy—of the power of darkness: Charlemagne was no doubt to a great extent deceived and urged on by the priests.

Under the avowed object of cementing the union between Church and State, for the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind, and for the enduring strength of the imperial government, the artful priests saw the way opening for their own temporal greatness and the more absolute sovereignty of Rome. And so it happened, as all history affirms. They very soon gained a position of

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worldly greatness over the conquered people and their lands. An entire change takes place just at this time in the outward condition of the clergy, and indeed in society generally. Ancient history disappears, we are told, at the death of Pepin, and mediæval life begins. A new state of society is inaugurated by his son—the last of barbaric kings and the first of feudal monarchs. But it is with ecclesiastical history we have to do, and here, again, we prefer giving a few extracts from the Dean—so often referred to—who will not be accused of unnecessary severity, but whose testimony is of the very highest integrity.

"The subjugation of the land appeared complete before Charlemagne founded successively his great religious colonies, the eight bishoprics of Minden, Seligenstadt, Verden, Bremen, Munster, Hildesheim, Osnaburg, and Paderborn. These, with many richly endowed monasteries like Hersfuld, became the separate centres from which Christianity and civilization spread in expanding circles. But though these were military as well as religious settlements, the ecclesiastics were the only foreigners. The more faithful and trustworthy Saxon chieftains, who gave the security of seemingly sincere conversion to Christianity, were raised into counts: thus the profession of Christianity was the sole test of fealty. . . .

"Charlemagne, in christian history, commands a more important station even than for his subjugation of Germany to the gospel, on account of his complete organization, if not foundation, of the high feudal hierarchy in a great part of Europe. Throughout the Western empire was, it may be said, constitutionally established this double aristocracy, ecclesiastical and civil. Everywhere the higher clergy and the nobles, and so downwards

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through the different gradations of society, even of the same rank, liable to many of the same duties, of equal, in some cases of co-ordinate, authority. Each district had its bishop and its count; the dioceses and the counties were mostly of the same extent. . . . .

"Charlemagne himself was no less prodigal than weaker kings of immunities and grants of property to churches and monasteries. With his queen Heldegard, he endows the church of St. Martin, in Tours, with lands in Italy. His grants to St. Denys, to Lorch, to Fulda, to Prum, more particularly to Herzfeld, and many Italian abbeys, appear among the acts of his reign.

"Nor were these estates always obtained from the king or the nobles. The stewards of the poor were sometimes the spoilers of the poor. Even under Charlemagne there are complaints against the usurpation of property by bishops and abbots, as against counts and laymen. They compelled the poor free man to sell his property, or forced him to serve in the army, and that on permanent duty, and so to leave his land either without owner, with all the chances that he might not return, or to commit it to the custody of those who remained at home in quiet, and seized every opportunity of entering into possession. *No Naboth's vineyard escaped their watchful avarice.*

"In their fiefs the bishop or abbot exercised all the rights of a feudal chieftain. . . . Thus the hierarchy, now a feudal institution, parallel to and co-ordinate with the temporal feudal aristocracy, aspired to enjoy, and actually before long did enjoy, the dignity, the wealth, the power, of suzerain lords. Bishops and abbots had the independence and privileges of inalienable fiefs; and at the same time began either sullenly to contest, or

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haughtily to refuse, those payments, or acknowledgments of vassalage, which sometimes weighed heavily on other lands. During the reign of Charlemagne, this theory of spiritual immunity slumbered, or rather had not quickened into life. It was boldly announced—so rapid was its growth—in the strife with his son, Louis the Pious. It was then asserted by the hierarchy, that all property given to the church, to the poor, to the saints, to God Himself—such were the specious phrases—was given absolutely, irrevocably, with no reserve. The king might have power over the knights' fees: over those of the church he had none whatever. Such claims were impious, sacrilegious, and implied forfeiture of eternal life. The clergy and their estates belonged to another realm, to another commonwealth; they were entirely, absolutely, independent of the civil power."*

THE FEUDAL HIERARCHICAL SYSTEM.

For centuries the papal cry to each succeeding monarch had been, "Give, give; endow, endow; and the blessed Peter shall surely send you victory over your enemies, prosperity in this world, and a place near himself in heaven." This cry was in a great measure answered about the beginning of the ninth century. The above extracts will give the reader some idea of the spoils which came to the clergy from the victories of Charles in Germany. It was chiefly out of these thirty-three years of internecine war, that the great feudal hierarchical system arose. Innumerable thousands were slain to make room for the bishops and abbots—an ecclesiastical aristocracy. Up rose the princely palaces of these great ecclesiastics

* *Latin Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 286.

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all over the conquered land: but their foundations were laid in cruelty, injustice, and blood.

Though more than a thousand years have passed away since the great patron of the church died, the palaces still live and are thickly planted all over Europe. But the heart sickens at the thought of the origin of these avowed palaces of peace; especially if we bear in mind the true character of the gospel; and that the ministers of Christ should ever seek to manifest the Spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus. The souls, not the property, of men should be their object. "We seek not *yours*, but *you*," should be their motto; going forth taking nothing of the Gentiles. But the example of Christ had been long forgotten. The church sank to the level and spirit of the world when she was united by Constantine to the State. This was her great fall, and from which her painful inconsistency flows. The love of the world, of absolute power, of universal dominion, then took possession of her whole being. Blinded by Satan, on whose throne (Rev. ii.) she sits, the shameless iniquity of her course can only be accounted for on the ground of his blinding power. All means, in her sight, were justifiable which had for their object the advancement of the Roman See.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LORD'S CARE OF HIS OWN.

The Lord had, no doubt, His many hidden ones, even in the darkest times, as in Thyatira: "But unto you I say, [and unto] the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." One thing, and only one, was to occupy the

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faithful after the apostasy had set in—the ascended Saviour—the Man in the glory. And to all such the sweet promise is, "And I will give him the Morning Star." But the outward or mere professing church, as allied to the State, was corrupt to the very core, and sunk, and blinded, and hardened, in the most unblushing wickedness; for the concentration of every form of evil was to be found in the chair of St. Peter. Even as to the religious wars, Charlemagne himself stands before us guiltless, compared with Hadrian.

We must remember that Charles was a barbaric king, though the greatest perhaps in European history, with the exception of Alexander and Cæsar; so that we can understand his object in seeking to unite and consolidate a great empire; but he was ignorant and superstitious as to divine things, though the religious element was strong in his mind. On this the pope acted, and led him to believe that a strong and wealthy church would make a strong and wealthy State; and that if he would please heaven and gain eternal life, the harmonious union of Church and State must be the basis of all his governmental schemes. He personally loved Hadrian, readily obeyed his call, yielded to his counsels, and wept when he heard of his death; which took place on the 26th of December, in the year 795, after the unusually long pontificate of twenty-three years and upwards. He might sometimes see the pope's real object under the greatest artifice; but, strong in his own self-reliant power, he could allow such things to pass without those feelings of distrust and jealousy, which would have been engendered in a feebler mind. Not given to change, he made a good friend.

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THE PAPAL FORGERY.

But the kindness of Charlemagne only excited the cupidity and envy of the rapacious priests. Not content with their estates and tithes, they aspired to a position far above the lay-lords, and even above the monarch himself. Stimulated by past success, they now attempted by a daring forgery to accomplish the object of their secular ambition. A title to almost imperial power is now for the first time, after the lapse of 450 years, brought to light. By this original deed of gift it was discovered, that all which Pepin or Charlemagne had conferred on the church of Rome was only an instalment of the royal grant to the chair of St. Peter by the "pious emperor Constantine."

As our main object throughout this period of the church's history is to present the real character of the papal system, the means by which it reached its wonderful influence and power, and the secularizing effects of the Church and State alliance, we copy the pope's own letter from Greenwood. The reader will no doubt be surprised to find that any man with the smallest pretension to respectability—far less the head of the church—could ever have fabricated such a document, and that merely to gain more territory and power. But we must remember that Thyatira was characterized by "the depths of Satan," and so has the papacy ever since she drew her first breath, and so must she be until she draws her last. Revelation xvii., xviii. describe both her character and her end.

"Considering," says pope Hadrian, "that in the days of the blessed pontiff Sylvester, that most pious Emperor did, *by his donation*, exalt and enlarge the holy

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catholic and apostolic church of Rome, giving unto her *supreme power over all the region of the West*, so now we beseech you, that in this our own happy day, the same holy church may sprout forth and exult, and be ever more and more lifted up, so that all people who shall hear thereof may exclaim, 'God save the king, and hear us in the day in which we call upon thee!' For behold, in those days arose Constantine, the christian Emperor, by whom God vouchsafed to give all things to His most holy church, the church of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles. All this, and many territories besides, which divers Emperors, patricians, and other God-fearing persons, had given to the blessed Peter and the holy Roman and apostolical church of God, for the benefit of their souls and the forgiveness of their sins, lying in the parts of Tuscany, Spoletum, Beneventum, Corsica, Savona—territories which were taken and kept by the impious nations of the Lombards—cause all this to be restored to us in these your days, according to the tenor of your several deeds of gift deposited in our archives of the Lateran. To that end we have directed our envoys to exhibit those deeds to you for your satisfaction; and in virtue of them we now call upon you to command the undiminished restitution of this patrimony of St. Peter into our hands; that by your conformity therewith the holy church of God may be put into full possession and enjoyment of its entire right; so that the prince of the apostles himself may intercede before the throne of the Almighty for long life to yourself and prosperity in all your undertakings."

THE IGNORANCE AND CREDULITY OF THE TIMES.

So deep was the ignorance and credulity of those

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times, that the most absurd fables were received with great reverence by all classes. The cunning priests knew how to clothe their religious frauds with the most specious piety, and to blind both king and people. According to the legend, Constantine was healed of the leprosy by Pope Sylvester; and so penetrated with gratitude was the Emperor, that he resigned to the popes the free and perpetual sovereignty of Rome, Italy, and the provinces of the West; and resolved on founding a new capital for himself in the East.

The object of Hadrian in forging such a deed, and in writing such a letter, was no doubt to influence Charlemagne to imitate the alleged liberality of his great predecessor. If he merely put the popes in possession of the said donation of Constantine, he was only acting as his executor; if he aspired to be a spontaneous benefactor of the church, he must exceed the limits of the original deed of gift. But the depths of this forgery we have not yet fathomed. It went to prove that the Greek Emperors, all these centuries, had been guilty of usurpation, and robbing the patrimony of St. Peter; that the popes were justified in appropriating their territory, and in rebelling against their authority; that the gifts of Pepin and Charlemagne were nothing more than the restitution of a small portion of the just and lawful dominions originally granted to the chair of St. Peter; and that he, Charlemagne, must consider himself as debtor to God and His church, so long as a single item of the debt thus entailed upon him remained unpaid.

Such were some of the convenient effects of the document for the purposes of Hadrian at the time; but though it may have been productive of great advantages to the papacy both then and afterwards, the forgery has

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long since been exposed. With the revival of letters and liberty, the fictitious deed was condemned, together with the *False Decretals*—the most audacious and elaborate of all pious frauds. Speaking of the Decretals, Milman observes, "They are now given up by all; not a voice is raised in their favour; the utmost that is done, by those who cannot suppress all regret at their expulsion, is to palliate the guilt of the forger, to call in question or to weaken the influence which they had in their own day, and throughout the later history of Christianity."*

THE FOUNDATIONS AND EDIFICE OF POPERY.

Such, alas! alas! were the foundations of the great papal edifice. We have been at some pains to see them laid; we are not mistaken. Were we to characterize the separate foundation-stones, we might speak of them as the most extravagant pretensions, the most insulting arrogance, the most barefaced forgeries, the most openly avowed and even death-defying love of idolatries, the most unscrupulous appropriation of stolen territory, the most unrelenting spirit of persecution, and, what may be said to be the topmost (as well as the foundation) stone, the most inordinate love of temporal sovereignty. But if we look inside the house, what do we find there? It is full of blasphemies, the worst kind of corruptions, and the concentration of all attractions for the flesh. (Rev. xviii. 12, 13.) The very essentials of Christianity were either corrupted or rejected—such as sacrifice, ministry, and priesthood.

* Milman, vol. ii. p. 375; Greenwood, book vi. chap. iii. p. 82.

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The mass was substituted for the finished work of Christ; the dogmatic teaching of the church for the ministry of the Spirit of God; and the great ecclesiastical system of priesthood—or rather, priestcraft—for the common priesthood of all believers, yea, for that of Christ Himself.

The Lord's supper had been gradually changed from the simple remembrance of His love, and shewing forth His death, to the idea of a sacrifice. Many superstitions were practised with the consecrated bread, or rather wafers. The sacrifice was supposed to avail for the dead as well as for the living; hence the practice of giving it to the dead, and buriyng it with them. The soul-destroying doctrine of *purgatory*, which had been sanctioned by Gregory the Great, was now spreading far and wide. It appears to have specially taken root in the English church before the ninth century. But the deception is manifest, for there is no purgatory but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son; as saith the apostle John, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Thank God, there is no limit to the cleansing power of the blood of Christ His Son; all who have faith in that blood are *whiter than snow*—perfectly fitted for the presence of God. But the doctrine of purgatory struck at the very root of this foundation-truth, and became a powerful instrument in the hands of the priests for extorting money from the dying, and for securing large legacies to the church; but almost everything was now made subservient to these base objects. The truth of God, the work of Christ, the character of the church, the souls and bodies of men, were all readily sacrificed for the aggrandizement of the See of Rome, and for the

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aggrandizement of the clergy in subordination to the papal system.

The ungodly lives of those entrusted with the government of the church and the care of souls, are also matters of bitter complaint with all honest historians, both then and now. But here it may be well to introduce one of good report—Mosheim—as a witness and confirmation of what we have said as to this period.

MOSHEIM'S SUMMARY.

"In the East, sinister designs, rancour, contentions, and strife were everywhere predominant. At Constantinople, or New Rome, those were elevated to the patriarchal chair who were in favour at court; and upon losing that favour, a decree of the Emperor hurled them from their elevated station. In the West, the bishops hung around the courts of princes, and indulged themselves in every species of voluptuousness: while the inferior clergy and the monks were sensual, and by the grossest vices corrupted the people whom they were set to reform. The ignorance of the clergy in many places was so great, that few of them could read or write. Hence, whenever a letter was to be penned, or anything of importance was to be committed to writing, recourse was generally had to some one individual, whom common fame invested with a certain dexterity in such matters. . . . .

"The bishops and the heads of monasteries held much real estate or landed property by feudal tenure; wherefore, when a war broke out, they were summoned personally to the camp, attended by the number of soldiers which they were bound to furnish to their sovereign.

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Kings and princes, moreover, that they might be able to reward their servants and soldiers for their services, often seized upon consecrated property, and gave it to their dependants; in consequence, the priests and monks before supported by it, sought relief for their necessities in committing any sort of crimes, and in contriving impostures.

"Few of those who were raised, about this time, to the highest stations in the church can be commended for their wisdom, learning, virtue, and other endowments proper for a bishop. The greater part of them, by their numerous vices, and all of them, by their arrogance and lust of power, entailed disgrace upon their memories. Between Leo IV., who died A.D. 855, and Benedict III., a woman, who concealed her sex, and assumed the name of *John*, it is said, opened her way to the pontifical throne by her learning and genius, and governed the church for a time. She is commonly called the Papess Joanna. During the five subsequent centuries, the witnesses to this extraordinary event are without number; nor did any one, prior to the Reformation by Luther, regard the thing as either incredible, or disgraceful to the church.

"All agree that in those dark days the state of Christianity was everywhere most deplorable; not only from amazing ignorance, the parent of superstition and moral debasement, but also from other causes. . . . . The sacred order, both in the East and in the West, were composed principally of men who were illiterate, stupid, ignorant of everything pertaining to religion. . . . . What the Greek pontiffs were, the single example of *Theophylact* shews; who, as credible historians testify, made traffic of everything sacred, and cared for nothing

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but his hounds and his horses. But though the Greek patriarchs were very unworthy men, yet they possessed more dignity and virtue than the Roman pontiffs. That the history of the Roman bishops in this century is a history, not of men, but of monsters, a history of the most atrocious villanies and crimes, is acknowledged by all the best writers, those not excepted even who plead for pontifical authority. . . . .

"The essence of religion was thought, both by Greeks and Latins, to consist in the worship of images, in honouring departed saints, in searching for and preserving relics, and in enriching priests and monks. Scarcely an individual ventured to approach God until interest had been duly sought with images and saints. In getting relics together, and seeking after them, all the world was busy to insanity."*

Nothing more, we think, need be said at present as to the nature—root and branch—of the papal system. In the mouth of at least three competent witnesses, all that we have said of Rome, from the beginning of the Thyatirian period, has been confirmed. And the half has not been told, especially on the subject of immorality. We could not transfer to our pages the open profligacy of the priests and monks. It is thought by some that the papacy fell to the deepest point of degradation in the ninth and tenth centuries. For many years the papal tiara was disposed of by the infamous Theodora and her two daughters, Marozia and Theodora. Such was their power and evil influence, by means of their licentious lives, that they placed in the chair of St. Peter whom they would—men like themselves. Our pages would be

* Mosheim's *History*, vol. iii. p. 184, 272.

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defiled by an account of their open, unblushing, immoralities. Such has been the papal succession. Surely Jezebel was truly represented by these women, and in the influence they obtained over the popes and the city of Rome. But, alas! alas! Jezebel, with all her associations, corruptions, tyrannies, idolatries, and uses of the civil sword, has been too faithfully represented by popery from its very foundation.

[END OF VOL. I.]

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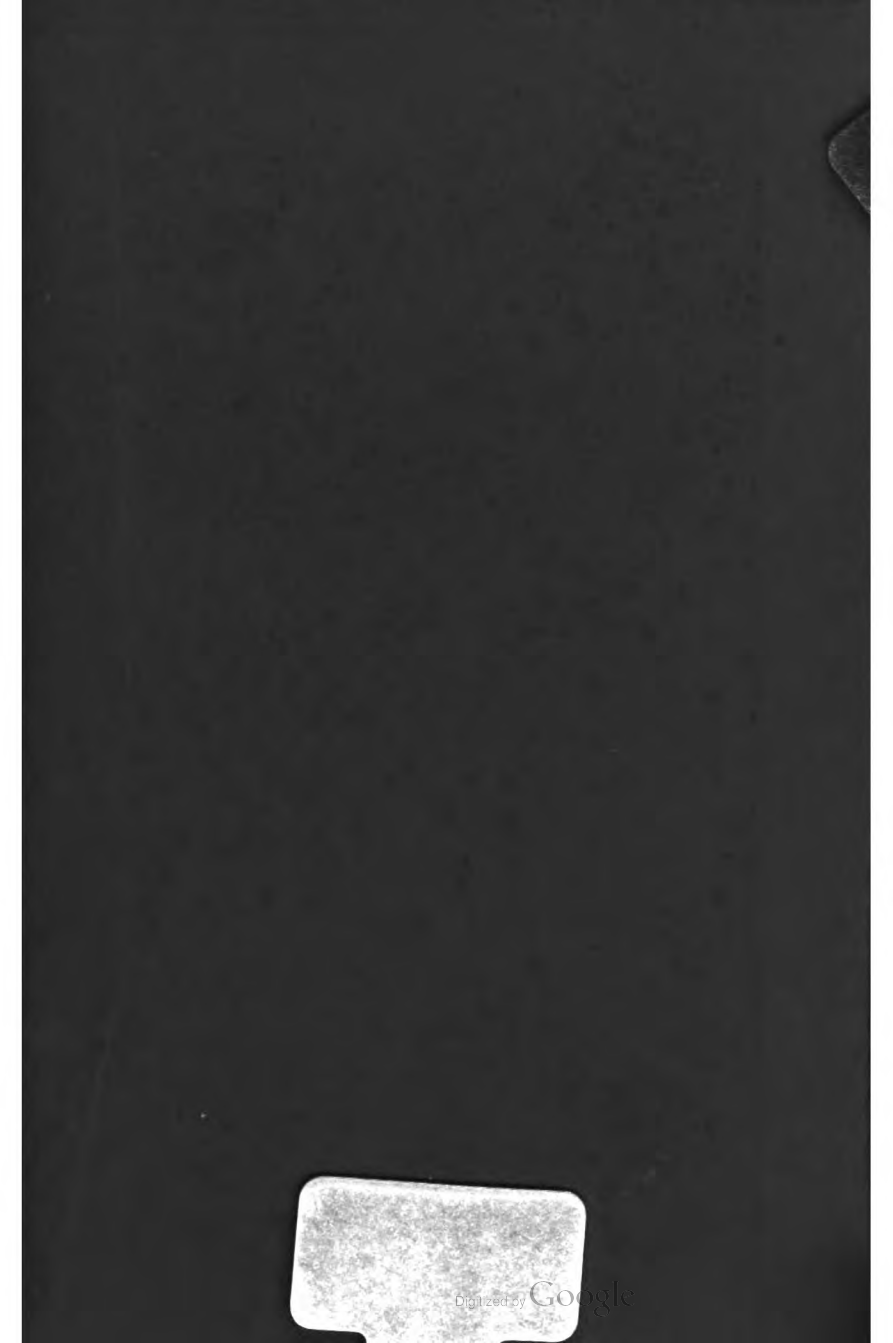
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